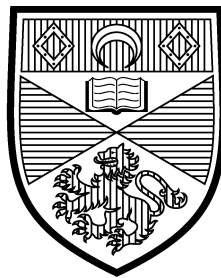


# The Definitional Dilemma of Terrorism: Seeking Clarity in Light of Terrorism Scholarship

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at the  
University of St Andrews

Date of Submission

15 December 2016



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## **Abstract**

The understanding of terrorism has thus far been determined not by some independent line of inquiry but instead by a strong interplay between conflicting moral positions. Treated sometimes as a method or tactic and at other times as a distinct form of violence, the true nature of terrorism remains elusive, while a failure to understand it has squarely been blamed on the moral problem. The conceptual and theoretical debate in the field of terrorism studies as a result has not progressed in any meaningful way. Issues that were associated with terrorism when a formal inquiry into the problem was first launched still remain unresolved. Basic questions as to whether terrorism generates fear and if it is possible to identify its victim or perpetrator continue to plague the terrorism discourse. Meanwhile matters that are crucial, such as the widespread tendency to treat terrorism as a tactic, strategy or ideology and the essentially contested character of terrorism scholarship are either ignored or erroneously taken for granted. This thesis will show that our inability to define terrorism is not due to the moral problem as it is made out to be but because of our failure to understand the true nature of terrorism. To accomplish this task, it not only analyzes issues that are regularly contested but also discusses in detail the ones that are trivialized and overlooked. It ultimately concludes that terrorism primarily plays only an auxiliary or a facilitatory role and therefore the key to defining it and understanding its true nature lies in its utility and function.

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It is only at the end of your PhD that you realize how big a part of your life it has been. It truly has been an incredible journey full of uncertainties and difficulties, yet in the end an extremely enriching and rewarding one. I shall always cherish the memories, both good and bad, and be grateful to all the people who made it possible.



*Dedicated to Ghalib Gillani and Richard English, the two people that inspire me most*

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## **Introduction**

The question over the definition of terrorism has been raised so many times and in so many contexts that even an allusion to it can be off-putting and exasperating. This is not necessarily because the discussion is deemed futile and unhelpful but because over the years it has not led to anything substantive or conclusive. Following the September 11 attacks, this dissatisfaction and frustration grew prodigiously as the issue failed to make any serious headway despite drawing in huge amount of financial and intellectual resources. The inability to reach a consensus has subsequently led to the conclusion that terrorism, whether ultimately definable or not, is an essentially contested term.

Essentially contested concepts are those that ‘inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users’ as ‘each party continues to defend its case with what it claims to be convincing arguments, evidence, and other forms of justification’ (Gallie, 1956: 168-169). With terrorism believed to be essentially contested, a failure to define it has somewhat acquired the status of orthodoxy in terrorism scholarship, prompting many scholars to simply accept the existing definitional quagmire as a perpetual and ineluctable status quo. This is not to say that the definitional dilemma and the challenges it raises are not deemed problematic, but more so to point out that it is a problem that academics feel they can do very little about. Resigned thus to a position of despondency, it is perhaps not surprising why attempts to define terrorism are viewed with scepticism and incredulity.

Notwithstanding the fact that the term is essentially contested, questions can and have even been raised over the usefulness of defining terrorism. After all, terms like democracy and power are also regularly contested, yet a failure to adequately define them is not deemed as problematic. More importantly, such failure has not prevented scholars from actively, and in many ways, successfully pursuing knowledge about these terms. As Richard English points out that ‘Many important phenomenon... elude consensual definition, but we do not consequently avoid analyzing them or using these terms’ (2016: 9). Given that terrorism is not the only contested term, the

amount of criticism and attention it draws certainly appears unfair and excessive. If other contested terms can do without a universally accepted or common definition then why can terrorism not?

While it is true that in comparison with other frequently contested terms, the notion of terrorism and the ambiguity surrounding its definition draws far more criticism and attention, it is important however to acknowledge the extent to which terrorism is contested, why it is contested, and the impact that has on both its study and policymaking. It is only when these factors are considered that we are able to understand why the definitional dilemma of terrorism, as opposed to other contested terms, is considered a major stumbling block for not only advancement or research undertakings in the field of terrorism studies but also our policy responses to incidents of terrorism more generally.

Now understandably it can be very difficult to explain why certain terms are essentially contested, as there is often a multitude of factors at play. And although this is generally true for terrorism as well, the contest and division over its precise meaning can nevertheless conveniently be expressed in moral terms. As a highly politicized and inherently pejorative term, terrorism is first and foremost believed to be a moral problem (See e.g. Wardlaw, 1989; Hoffman, 2006).

Responsible for the popular adage ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’, the moral problem, at base, is simply concerned with the justification of terrorist violence. However, this deceptively straightforward conundrum has over the years strongly divided opinion. It is the severity and gravity of this division that is primarily responsible for the contested nature and in extension the existing definitional dilemma of terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically however, it is also the main reason why a definitional pursuit of terrorism cannot be abandoned. The opposing moral viewpoints not only produce antithetical research agendas but also provide contradictory and therefore unhelpful policy recommendations. Clearly if terrorism was given some justificatory space then not

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<sup>1</sup> Although notions of power and democracy can too evoke different moral responses, yet unlike terrorism a failure to understand or define them is not exclusively pinned down on their inherent morality or immorality.

only will that influence our understanding of the problem but it will also determine our policy responses that have wide-ranging societal implications. Conversely, this understanding, response and subsequent implications will be very different if terrorism was deemed morally reprehensible and completely indefensible.

Oscillating uncontrollably and somewhat permanently between different moral viewpoints, the study of terrorism is often more representative of respective moral positions than terrorism itself.

The inability to define or understand terrorism primarily due to the moral problem therefore presents a serious predicament, as a flawed understanding of terrorism could easily lead to precarious policies, which could have a detrimental effect on the broader society. Admittedly, defining terrorism is an arduous and gruelling undertaking and while the prevailing discontent and disillusionment regarding its prospects is understandable, it should by no means be excusable. The challenges it otherwise poses are far too grave to be ignored. Not only has the credibility and validity of the study of terrorism been seriously undermined, but the field as a whole has become dangerously fragmented. As exasperating and frustrating as it may be, the problem therefore simply cannot be brushed aside.

Nevertheless, as crucial as it is, it will still be somewhat naïve to think that one can come up with a universal definition of terrorism that everyone can agree on. This of course does not mean that the entire undertaking is essentially pointless. It is important not to forget that due to varying subjective inferences we all intrinsically tend to draw, achieving universal consensus on any term or phrase is not a difficult but an impossible task. Despite this however, we have been able to achieve a broad consensus on the meaning or general understanding of ordinary terms including many of the essentially contested ones. This has been made possible by engaging with the terms and actively trying to understand their meaning rather than simply conceding that they were indefinable. So the fact that a universal consensus on a definition of terrorism cannot be achieved should neither come as a surprise nor as a disappointment.

Thus, in spite of its visibly grim prospects of finding something everyone can agree on, the definitional quest of terrorism must not be forsaken. For even if it is ultimately unsuccessful (which in all likelihood it will be), it can and will significantly contribute

towards achieving some form of broad consensus on the meaning of terrorism. This is because a pursuit of definition, among other things, allows one to engage with important conceptual and theoretical issues that are otherwise unattended or simply neglected. This makes it especially indispensable to terrorism, given the dearth of theory in its field of study. The definitional quest, in other words, cannot be abandoned because it holds the key to unlocking the door to much needed conceptual and theoretical development in the field of terrorism studies.

Unlocking the door to conceptual and theoretical development and subsequently laying down the essential groundwork for achieving broad consensus over the meaning of terrorism is precisely the objective of this thesis. Although a definition has also been proposed at the end, it is more important to see how this definition was arrived at and whether that process in any way help us better understand some of the most outstanding issues associated with terrorism.

As the essentially contested nature and the ensuing definitional crisis is primarily blamed on the moral problem, the issues and characteristics associated with terrorism though often diverse and dissimilar, generally adhere to certain common and overarching themes. A rigorous and thorough examination of these themes is clearly necessary to not only understand the complexities of the moral problem but also to fully appreciate the extent to which terrorism is contested. Accordingly therefore, the first four chapters of the thesis identify the broad themes of terror, victim, and actor, which as it will be demonstrated, not only encapsulate but also facilitate a discussion on virtually all issues and characteristics that are typically attributed to terrorism.<sup>2</sup>

While the first four chapters of the thesis discuss popular and constantly recurring themes, the last two chapters are concerned with issues that are either overlooked or simply taken for granted. Chapter five engages with the extremely undertheorized problem of whether terrorism is a tactic, strategy or ideology, as it attempts to understand the complex nature of terrorism and resolve our longstanding confusion over labelling an actor terrorist. Chapter six on the other hand meticulously examines and scrutinizes the discourse on terrorism by looking at how and why the field of terrorism studies became deeply fragmented and polarized over time. Both these

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that these three themes and all associated variables also represent the most frequently highlighted and discussed problems in relation to the definition of terrorism.

chapters are crucial contributions as one tries to understand the complex and often confusing manifestations of terrorism and the other attempts to make sense of the discourse that lays the strongest claim to study terrorism.

As this thesis relies almost entirely on extensive literature review, its methodology is fairly uncomplicated and straightforward. Given that the problem of terrorism, especially since 9/11, has attracted interest from various academic quarters, the thesis takes a multi-disciplinary approach and engages with a wide range of different sources. Its primary focus, however, has been on the mainstream or orthodox terrorism scholarship.<sup>3</sup> In order to understand and fully appreciate the divergent academic viewpoints and criticism of mainstream scholarship, it also actively engages with the oppositional self-styled critical studies. To do this effectively and methodically, a comprehensive content analysis of leading journals in the field has also been conducted. The journals utilized for this purpose are *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (SCT), *Terrorism and Political Violence* (TPV), and *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (CST). For SCT and TPV, the content analysis has been carried out for the last two decades (1995-2015), and for CST, since its launch in 2008.

While SCT and TPV are widely regarded as the foremost mainstream journals in terrorism scholarship, CST is clearly the leading and perhaps the only terrorism specific journal of critical studies. The purpose of conducting a content analysis is mainly to see how the term terrorism is differently understood and applied in the academic discourse, so that credible and valid inferences can be drawn to make what will clearly be very bold claims and assertions.

Lastly, the notion of terrorism, by virtue of its nature, raises important philosophical questions, answers to which are generally not available in terrorism scholarship. This is not to say that there has not been any significant contribution from the field of philosophy (works by philosophers such as CAJ Coady, Robert Holmes, Virginia

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<sup>3</sup> Critically speaking, it can be difficult, not to mention controversial, to categorize a branch of scholarship as mainstream or orthodox. Nevertheless, keeping in line with conventional wisdom, orthodox scholarship will be simply be understood in terms of its impact factor and the popular perception and representation of it. Paul Wilkinson, Martha Crenshaw, Bruce Hoffman, Walter Laqueur, and Alex Schmid are widely regarded as leading orthodox scholars in the field of terrorism studies.

Held, Jeremy Waldron, Igor Primoratz, and Anne Schwenkenbecher are particularly noteworthy) but more so to point out that such work remains largely on the periphery and has not been properly integrated in the mainstream terrorism scholarship. This thesis therefore not only analyzes all major philosophical contributions to understanding terrorism but independently also engages with the wider field of moral philosophy.<sup>4</sup> This thesis can in fact partly be regarded as a philosophical investigation into the problem of terrorism.

Be it philosophy, mainstream or critical scholarship, the inability to define terrorism is unequivocally blamed on the moral problem. As might be expected therefore, the moral problem receives significant attention in this thesis. The assertion itself, however, is ultimately challenged as it will be argued that the definitional dilemma is in fact due to our inability to understand the true nature of terrorism and not because of the moral problem as is generally assumed. After disentangling it from its moral bondage, the thesis will demonstrate how it is possible to achieve a broad consensus over the meaning of terrorism if not a precise definition.

The goal being set here is not to deliberately disregard and discredit mainstream scholarship, nor is there any intention to engage in critical or post-modern sophistication to reinvent the wheel, but to objectively (as much as possible) understand the true nature of terrorism by exposing and opposing the façade of many of our conventional wisdoms.

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning here that this research is largely limited to Western academic discourse.



## **1. Terror**

Of all the characteristics of terrorism, no other stands out more prominently than 'terror'. Given that terror is part of the word terrorism, this distinction is hardly surprising. What is surprising however is the debate and contest over whether it is an indispensable characteristic of terrorism. Over the years concerns have been raised over the importance of terror to understanding terrorism and whether it should be made an element of definition.

Despite the visible centrality of terror to terrorism, the attribute oddly has not been subjected to meticulous academic scrutiny. Most of the scholarly work presents only a rudimentary view of terror and very few scholars ever venture beyond stating that terrorism does/does not generate terror. As a result of this, some very basic yet fundamental questions about terror and its relationship with terrorism remain largely unanswered.

Notwithstanding the lack of attention however, almost all scholars will generally agree that the notion of terror is unquestionably essential to understanding the problem of terrorism. As Ami-Jacques Rapin points out, 'the root of the problem lies in the notion of terror itself, both from a definitional point of view and from the perspective of developing a conceptual framework' (2009: 167). This chapter therefore seeks to explore and hopefully answer some of the longstanding questions regarding the centrality of terror beginning first by briefly tracing the etymological roots of the term.

## **Etymological roots of terror**

The importance of terror is demonstrated by the fact that the term terrorism is etymologically derived from it. The word “terror” itself comes from the Latin word ‘terrere’ that entered the English language through French in the sixteenth century (Schmid, 2011: 41). The Merriam-Webster and Oxford English dictionary define terror as ‘a very strong feeling of fear’<sup>5</sup> and ‘extreme fear’<sup>6</sup> respectively.

The term terrorism was first used during the French revolution for Maximilien Robespierre’s government or ‘reign of terror’ from 1793-1794. Robespierre himself viewed terror in positive light as ‘the term derives from the Jacobin’s positively connoted use of the word terror as a means of justice’ (Rapin, 2009: 165). The term terror ‘was first used in a political context by Edmund Burke, who spoke of Robespierre’s revolutionary government... as a reign of terror’ (Schinkel, 2009: 183). The first use of terror in a political context thus refers to a form of government through fear or intimidation. Irrespective of any specific political context and whether it was viewed positively or negatively, the use of the term terror signified employment or application of fear in some way, which is also in line with the dictionary definitions of terror. The etymology of terror thus gestures towards the centrality of fear.

Similarly, most scholars also typically emphasize fear or some variant of it when conceptualizing the terror of terrorism. Clutterbuck points out that terrorism intends to ‘frighten and coerce a large number of others’ (1977: 11). Lasswell believes that terrorism arouses ‘acute anxieties’ (1978: 255). For Laqueur, Wilkinson and Hoffman, terrorism intends to create a climate of fear. Claridge believes that terrorism aims to alter the behaviour of an audience through generation of fear (1996: 50). Crenshaw points out that terrorism intends to ‘shock, frighten, excite, or outrage’ (2011: 2). Walter explains the terror of terrorism as ‘the psychic state- extreme fear- and on the other hand, the thing that terrifies- the violent event that produces the psychic state’ (1969: 5). Simply put, there is generally no academic disagreement on terror (of terrorism) being understood in terms of fear.

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<sup>5</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/terror>. Accessed on: 27/03/2015.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/terror>. Accessed on: 27/03/2015.

In light of popular and academic perception, it can therefore safely be inferred that terror on its own is almost universally understood in terms of fear. In a sense then the term terror appears to refer to a ‘psychological state of mind’ (Schmid, 2011: 41), a state that Charles Townshend refers to as ‘collective alarmism’ (2002: 15). Thus, irrespective of our subjective positions on terrorism, we can all at least agree that terror corresponds to generation of fear (or some variant of it).<sup>7</sup> Whether this generation of fear is indispensable to terrorism is a different matter and will be discussed later in the chapter.

Having shown that the term terror on its own is understood in terms of fear, it is important now to understand why its relationship with terrorism is deemed problematic.

### **Seven objections to terror**

There is considerable debate in the terrorism discourse regarding the importance of terror. At one end, there are scholars who believe that terror is fundamental to the understanding of terrorism and therefore necessary for any conceptualization of the term. While at the other end, there are those who actively make a case against such centrality of terror. Different scholars tend to have different reasons for their objections. Despite the wide array of reasons however, seven major objections to the centrality of terror can be identified in the terrorism discourse.

The first major objection concerns the etymological and semantic roots of terrorism. As discussed already, the etymological origins of terrorism can be traced back to the word terror. Because of this connection, some scholars are weary of severing the semantic and etymological connection terrorism has with terror. As Goodin, points out, ‘It would be etymologically odd (to say the least) for the analysis of ‘terrorism’ to lose track of its roots and fail to analyze terrorism first and foremost in terms of ‘terror’” (2006: 45).

As pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, the word terror was first used in a positive sense to describe Robespierre’s reign of terror as a mean of justice. However,

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<sup>7</sup> Going forward, I will use the terms terror and fear interchangeably.

a historical investigation reveals that soon afterwards semantic changes led to neologism and terms like ‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorism’ with a somewhat negative undertone emerged to describe the perpetrators of terrorist violence. These new terms were mostly used to describe political opponents in a derogatory and disapproving way (Rapin, 2009: 165-166).

This shows that the term terror, after its semantic makeover, transformed significantly- from describing something positively to categorically condemnable. Such a shift or reversal of meaning is perhaps not unique or intrinsic to terrorism alone given that it is a political terminology, which more than often tend to have a polemical meaning. The German philosopher Carl Schmitt observed that ‘all political concepts, images, and terms have a polemical meaning. They are focused on a specific conflict and are bound to a concrete situation; ... they turn into empty and ghostlike abstractions when this situation disappears’ (Schmitt quoted in Finlay, 2009: 751). The term terrorism does appear to bear all characteristics of an archetypal polemic concept. Originally intended for the French reign of terror, which lasted only a year, the term soon lost its point of reference, becoming thereafter an abstract concept that played into the hands of political rivals and lost connection with its original usage.

Given this history, it is not surprising that some academics warn against using etymology as a guide. It is argued that although etymology has historical and instructive value, it is not always helpful as far as the actual usage of words are concerned, as Shanahan notes ‘But whereas etymology can be instructive for understanding the origin of a word or concept, it is often a poor guide to current or actual usage’ (2010: 181).

The second objection is regarding the subjective nature of fear. This opposition comes mainly from the positivist and the empiricist positions. The objection here is that fear is a very subjective phenomenon as we all have varying threshold of fear and experience it in different ways. As Wardlaw explains, ‘We all have different thresholds of fear and our personal and cultural backgrounds make certain images, experiences, or fears more terrifying to each of us than to others’ (1989: 8). In other words, what frightens one individual may not necessarily frighten another. This subjective character of fear renders it very difficult to make generalizations about

terrorism. It also poses serious challenges for making empirical observations about terrorism and studying it scientifically and objectively.

The cornerstones of the scientific method broadly involve the following steps: objective observation, formulation of a hypothesis, testing of the hypothesis, and subsequent development of general theories. In the case of terrorism however the subjective character of fear would make even the first step of the scientific process (objective observation) extremely difficult, if not impossible. Thus 'Because of the complex interplay of the subjective forces... it is very difficult to accurately define terror and study it scientifically (Wardlaw, 1989: 8). Owing to these empirical challenges many academics either downplay the importance of fear or exclude it from the research process altogether. Weinberg et al., in an attempt to define terrorism empirically analyzed the usage of the term by the academics in the field. The most striking finding of their research was the 'virtual absence of references to the psychological element, heretofore widely thought to be at the heart of the concept' (2004: 777).

Schmid and Jongman performed a similar research and analyzed 109 academic definitions of terrorism (1988: 28) and observed a frequency of 51% for the elements of fear and terror and 41.5% for psychological effects (1988: 28). Weinberg et al.'s research in comparison only found a frequency of 22% and 5.5% for fear generation and the psychological effect respectively (2004: 781). They point out that these findings challenge the orthodox assumptions regarding the centrality of fear and psychological effect. This, they argue, is actually helpful because 'By ignoring the psychological element, by, in effect, taking the terror out of terrorism, the definition facilitates observation of the phenomenon' (p. 787). Although they concur that their 'consensus definition' is 'highly general' and 'seems too vague' (Ibid.), the low levels of frequencies observed for fear and psychological impact does reflect the academic tendency to steer clear of these elements. Their research is also a prime example of how some academics believe that taking fear out could facilitate objective observation and inquiry into the problem of terrorism.

The desire to follow strict scientific methods and acquire objective knowledge about terrorism has deep roots in the positivist school of thought and is part of its age-old tussle with the interpretivist position that accommodates subjective interpretations.

Scholars of positivist disposition are therefore always keen to find ways around the otherwise different subjective interpretations of terror and terrorism. And since the element of fear or terror is one of the most outstanding subjective attributes of terrorism, its denouncement is hardly surprising.

The third objection is less of an objection and more of a criticism of the supposedly unfair importance that is given to terror. The main argument is that terrorism is and should not be just about terror. This objection draws on the etymological debate and posits that the presence of the word terror in terrorism misleadingly suggests that terrorism revolves primarily around terror and fear. The disproportionate attention to terror that follows causes other important elements of terrorism to be neglected or overlooked. Instead, it is argued that terrorism is a heterogeneous phenomenon with terror being just one of its facets. As English points out 'there is far more than just terror at the heart of terrorist violence' and that 'any serious definition of the concept of terrorism will recognize its heterogeneity' (2006: 6, 22). Teichman also notes that it is important to remember that 'Terrorism is not only terror' (1989: 511). Schmid similarly acknowledges that 'terrorists create terror- but not only terror' (2005: 26).

With its generation of fear and psychological impact, it is believed that the terror attribute, could easily outshine terrorism's equally important other attributes. A focus on terror in other words reduces or shifts focus from other essential components of terrorism, which could not only prevent an accurate analysis of what the terrorists might be trying to communicate but potentially also undermine a broader and more accurate understanding of the overall terrorism problem. As Silke points out that 'outrage and horror can never be the sole foundation on which to build an accurate understanding of the worst terrorist atrocities' and that we should not be 'simply caught up with the horror of the incident' (2003: 37, 40).

The fourth objection concerns the intent of the perpetrator of terrorist violence. This objection challenges the view that the primary intention of terrorist violence is to evoke fear and terror in the general population. Scholars adhering to this view strongly criticize the widespread assumption (popularized by leading scholars like Laqueur, Wilkinson, and Hoffman) that terrorism is a form of violence that deliberately aims to create a climate of fear. The main objection is that terrorism does not always intend as such and can have objectives other than generation of fear.

Waldron for instance argues that terror and intimidation is not always the intention of terrorist violence. A terrorist act could be 'intended as punishment or retaliation', 'a form of therapy for the perpetrators', 'to attract publicity to the cause' or to 'send a message of some sort to the targeted population' (2004: 25-28). Coady, in a similar vein, also points out that defining terrorism in the spirit of fear and anxiety makes a definition 'too specific about the purposes of terrorist acts'. The purpose of terrorist violence, he argues, is not always to terrorize, instead it could be for 'publicity value, for symbolic reasons, or merely to strike the only blow thought to be possible' (2004: 6, 9). Hence, if terrorists do not always seek to create terror then it would be wrong to suggest that terrorist violence deliberately inflicts fear.

It must be pointed out here that this objection only contests deliberate generation of fear. It does not rule out the likelihood of fear being a by-product. The element of deliberate generation of fear will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The fifth objection is somewhat odd and to an extent fairly contentious as well. The objection goes that terrorism does not necessarily generate fear even if it is the deliberate intention of the terrorists. There are generally believed to be three ways in which people may not be affected by the terror of terrorist violence.

First, it is argued that terrorist violence over time could become part of the everyday life as people grow accustomed to the violence and the horror terrorism creates. This argument is usually made for communities that are subject to frequent acts of terrorist violence over a considerably lengthy period of time. In a study on the prolonged impact of terrorist violence on the Israeli population, Bleich et al. measured the post traumatic stress levels in the broader community and concluded that the level of fear in the general population decreases if terrorist attacks continue for a long period of time (2006: 9). They concluded that if terrorism occurs over an extended period of time, it loses much of its shock and awe value and fails to generate fear in the wider population.

Second, it is believed in some academic quarters that when a community is threatened with terrorist violence, then instead of spreading fear and horror, terrorism can sometimes have the opposite effect. When faced with a common threat, people generally put their differences aside and unite against it. A terrorist attack that can target anyone of them thus strengthens their resolve, makes them stronger, and brings

them together. As Rodin notes 'It does not seem to be the case that terrorism invariably has the effect of causing terror in a population. On the contrary, there have been instances in which communities have grown stronger' (2004: 761).

Third, and the last reason in this vein is rooted in the way the human mind perceives and responds to terrorist actions at a psychological level. It mainly applies to targets that are not directly threatened by the terrorist violence but relate in some way with the direct victim of it. The main argument is that if people are not direct victims of terrorist violence and get to know about it through news media or some other source, then they will only be affected by it temporarily. Horgan points out that although we may feel some form of anxiety after hearing of a terrorist act but it will be of a limited duration and 'despite our exposure to terrorist events via the printed or television media, our memory of terrorist events appears to recede swiftly' (2005: 14).

The argument that terrorism fails to generate fear suffers from several inherent problems. Firstly, since growing accustomed to terrorist violence is dependent on its sustained usage, the argument can only be applied to communities that have long-drawn-out conflicts or prolonged terrorist movements. Secondly, it is an approach that aims to determine the individual state of mind, which is a very complex and delicate undertaking. As there is no direct or straightforward way to determine individual psychology, certain indirect techniques such as measuring stress levels among individuals are utilized in all such studies (See e.g. Horgan, 2005; Avi Bleich et al., 2006). Clearly however, stress is not the same as terror as Rapin points out 'we should not consider that 'stress' is equivalent to 'terror' without raising once again the problem of accurately defining the terms appropriate for describing the psychological impact of violence' (2000: 173).

The sixth objection provides perhaps the most important and vital critique on terror. The central argument is that terror is not unique to terrorism as it can be observed in all other forms of violence as well. As English points out that terror is not a distinguishing characteristic of terrorism since it is widely practiced in other forms of violence as well (2009: 5-7). Teichman believes that terrorism is not just about terror because if it was then 'almost all forms of warfare would be terrorism, and so would be a lot of other human activities' (1989: 511). In fact many scholars believe that other forms of violence such as conventional wars and genocide produce far greater



fear and terror than terrorism, as McPherson observes that both terrorism and conventional wars produce terror with the latter producing it to far greater effect (2007: 529).

It is important to point out here that even though many scholars raise concerns over the exceptionality of terror to terrorism, many still make it a matter of definition (English, Teichman, and McPherson), although they may have completely different reasons for doing so. Some do it to emphasize the importance of terror to terrorism specifically, others to avoid an etymological contradiction, and others still that don't want to uproot the common meaning or understanding of the term.

On the other hand, there are other scholars who believe that since terror occurs in other forms of violence as well, incorporating it into the conceptual and definitional framework of terrorism would not only be inaccurate and misleading but also of little analytical help. This group does not denounce the importance of terror altogether but believe that it should not be made a matter of definition. Coady for instance argues that even though terror or spreading fear is a distinctive feature of terrorism but 'it should not be made a matter of definition' (1985: 54). Shanahan categorically excludes the element of terror and fear from his definition and believes that it is not a distinguishing characteristic of terrorism (2009: 181). Chadwick also notes that any political body that chooses to use violence causes terror and therefore excludes it from his definition of terrorism (2009: 443).

Kaplan belongs to a third group of scholars that broadly agree on other forms of violence generating terror but point out that it is particularly exceptional to terrorism because terrorist violence always evokes fear. Fear and terror, in other words, are deemed more central to terrorism than any other form of violence. Kaplan therefore is critical of other scholars that leave out the terror attribute. For him generation of fear is the most essential ingredient of terrorist violence (2009: 181). Goodin similarly believes that fear, although not the sole province of terrorism, is its most outstanding feature and should therefore never be left out of its definition (2006: 37).

The last and perhaps the most contested objection to terror is rooted in the moral problem. Although the moral problem revolves primarily around the victims of terrorist violence, generation of fear especially when it is deemed deliberate is an important reason why terrorism is regarded as an immoral and illegitimate form of

violence. Burke points out that terrorism raises serious normative challenges as it targets civilians and generates fear (2008: 39). Several other scholars have also noted that part of the moral problem is that terrorism is seen to generate terror. Scheffler, for instance, believes that ‘terrorism is morally suggestive precisely because ‘terror’ is its linguistic root’ (2006: 16). Chadwick also notes that the word terrorism has a negative connotation because it derives from the word terror (2009: 443).

A form of violence that deliberately targets unarmed seemingly innocent civilians with the intention to generate terror, horror, and panic will certainly be viewed as dreadful and appalling. Against this backdrop a moral verdict that denounces such violence as wrong and unacceptable is certainly not surprising. This moral judgment is believed to have reduced the word terrorism to nothing more than a pejorative term that is used by different political actors to denounce their enemies. To avoid this pejorative undertone and the moral problem altogether, some academics (mostly critical scholars) criticize the terror element and often exclude it from their conceptualization of the terrorism problem.

To understand the moral problem in its entirety, it must be discussed in tandem with the victim of terrorist violence, a discussion that will be undertaken in the following chapter. What is important to note here is that the moral objection has led to a strong criticism of the terror attribute and encourages its exclusion from any formal conceptualization of the terrorism problem.

The academic objections highlighted here demonstrate only the extent to which the element of terror is contested in the terrorism discourse. And while these objections to terror allow us to understand the divergent academic positions on the matter, they do not offer any clear solution to the problem. On the contrary, these objections in fact reveal a failure or reluctance of terrorism scholarship to engage with deeper intellectual and conceptual issues that the terror of terrorism poses. Conveniently however, this intellectual void can be filled by the field of philosophy. By shedding light on where fear comes from and how it functions in the society, philosophy can help us better understand terror and its bearing on terrorism. It is for this reason that it is important now to discuss in detail the philosophical roots of terror.

## **The philosophical roots of terror**

I shall begin a philosophical enquiry into terror by engaging with the scholarly work of two of the most influential intellectual thinkers of Western political theory, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes.

Locke's philosophy has had a major impact on the political traditions of the modern world and although unlike Hobbes his work is not directly concerned with fear, his conceptualization of the state of nature, the rights of individuals, and the civil contract theory can help us better understand how fear functions in the society. Despite the numerous and often conflicting readings of Locke, 'few would dispute the claim', as Yolton argues 'that Locke's analysis of society rests upon two stock theoretical devices: natural law and the state of nature' (1958: 477).

Prior to the formation of civil society individuals find themselves in a state of nature with each other. According to Locke, a state of nature refers to an absence of formal rules and procedures and a consensual governing body. It is a state of nature where every individual has equal freedom and liberty, which is governed not by any sanctioned authority but by a law of the nature or natural law (Chadwick, 2009: 439).<sup>8</sup> Tully defines this natural law as 'a set of objective moral principles that express what man ought to do and forebear, cross-culturally and trans-historically valid, independent of man's subjective will and discoverable by reason' (1993: 292).

Thus, in a Lockean state of nature the individual freedom and liberty is determined not by any sanctioned authority but through universal moral principles underscored by the natural law. Ashcraft points out that Locke regards this state of nature as 'both an historical and a moral description of human existence' (1968: 898). Chadwick further asserts that by virtue of this law of nature, individuals have two main powers 'the right of self-preservation and the right of punishment' (2009: 439). The right of self-preservation empowers an individual to conserve his right to freedom and liberty within the premise of the law of nature, whereas the right of punishment grants him the power to punish those who transgress on other's rights and 'act contrary to the law

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<sup>8</sup> Yolton points out that there is some confusion regarding Locke's state of nature. As some scholars understand it to be nomadic tribes lacking any formal civil structures, while others argue that he meant 'some condition of primitive man' (1958: 492-493). For our discussion, the Lockean state of nature simply refers to a society that lacks a government and formal rules and procedures.

of nature' (2009: 439).

Chadwick believes that this right of punishment raises three major problems of impartiality, degree, and effective power. Impartiality refers to observing complete neutrality and fairness in punishing the transgressors and to the absence of a guarantee that an individual will not be biased in observing his right of punishment. Degree corresponds to the problem of fitting punishment that must be proportionate to the scale of transgression.<sup>9</sup> And lastly the problem of effective power points to the absence of common authority required to carryout the desired punishment. Locke believes that the solution to these problems would require the individuals to voluntarily give up their right of punishment that they have in a state of nature to a common and mutually agreed upon authority so that the society can collectively judge and justly standardize punishment (p. 440). This is accomplished through forming a civil society by consent where security of individual freedom and liberty is ensured and fixed standard punishments are set out for any lawbreakers for general common good (Ashcraft, 1968: 911).

Hobbes's conception of state of nature is fundamentally different from its Lockean counterpart. Where the Lockean state of nature is not necessarily lawless and amoral (as there is still the law of nature), a Hobbesian state of nature, in Hobbes's own classical account is a 'war of all against all', which results in a perpetual condition of uncertainty and insecurity. These insecurities in a Hobbesian state of nature can best be categorized as 'material' and 'mental'.

Kronman provides a detailed account of what can otherwise be termed as material insecurities. He points out that in a Hobbesian state of nature individuals face two different kinds of insecurities. The first insecurity, which Kronman calls 'vulnerability of possession', is regarding the safety and vulnerability of one's possession, which in a state of nature are 'subject to attack and expropriation by others'. He terms the second insecurity as 'transactional insecurity', which corresponds to the absence of any procedural guarantees in an exchange between individuals, a transaction in which an individual can be 'denied whatever it was he bargained for in return' (1985: 6).

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<sup>9</sup> The problem of degrees of punishment has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The second insecurity 'mental' is grounded in human nature and psychology. This insecurity underlines the fundamental human fear of mortality and impending death. According to Hobbes, what distinguishes man from animals is that the former is aware of his ultimate death and 'the consequence of this awareness is constant anxiety' (Ahrensdorf, 2000: 580). McBride explains this as 'existential anxiety', essentially a form of psychological fear 'that comes from recognizing human mortality' (2011: 561). She further explains that this existential anxiety intensifies with growing 'mortality salience', which is 'the degree to which an individual is aware of his mortality' (p. 563). The more the mortality salience the greater will be the existential anxiety.

The mental and material insecurities together generate an intense state of fear, which is the central theme of Hobbesian philosophy. As Blits points out, 'More than any other philosopher, Thomas Hobbes emphasizes the determining power of fear. Fear, according to Hobbes, suffuses and shapes human life' (1989: 417). A Hobbesian state of nature is therefore extremely undesirable and can only be categorized as total anarchy. Hobbes's solution to this total anarchy is the creation of an all powerful leviathan or state, to which all individuals must surrender unconditionally, 'so that they might thereby escape once and for all from the natural state of war' (Ahrensdorf, 2000: 582).

Just as with the state of nature, Hobbesian Leviathan is also intrinsically different from Lockean civil society. Where consent is at the heart of a Lockean civil society, Hobbesian leviathan demands absolute submission. Thus where in a Lockean state of nature, law and state, are deemed essential primarily for regulating and institutionalizing punishment, in a Hobbesian state they are necessitated by the perpetual condition of insecurity. A Lockean civil society rose out of universal moral considerations, impartial treatment of all individuals, and a fair and standard judicial system for the punishment of any transgressors. Hobbesian leviathan, on the other hand, emerged to tame and keep in check the intrinsically bad human nature and demands total and unconditional obedience.

Particularly relevant to our discussion here is the Lockean notion of punishment and Hobbesian conception of fear. Lockean punishment, as already discussed, is primarily aimed at disciplining all those individuals that transgress the fundamental rights of

others. Such outlaws violate a basic right, namely the right of self-preservation that each and every individual has been granted by the law of nature. And although a Lockean state of nature optimistically posits that there need not be transgressors, the idea of a civil society is still advocated to account for any deviations. A Lockean civil society in this sense therefore appears to be more precautionary and facilitatory than an absolute necessity. Hobbesian fear in a state of nature, on the other hand, is not an anomaly but a tangible reality, which in the absence of an overarching authority will essentially result in complete chaos and destruction. The Hobbesian leviathan, therefore, is not a precautionary measure but an absolute necessity for the survival and preservation of humanity.

Despite this seeming incompatibility between Lockean punishment and Hobbesian fear, a link between the two can still be observed. Although Locke is generally optimistic of both the state of nature and civil society, harmful and mischievous behaviour is not ruled out of hand. In fact, his notion of punishment is primarily intended to account for such deviations. Lockean punishment mainly calls for the formation of civil society because individuals in their personal capacity are deemed incapable of judicially performing their right of punishment. The act of transgression (for which the idea of punishment has been advanced) is by its nature a violation of other's fundamental right of self-preservation. This violation of the basic right or even the possibility of its violation affects the human psychology and naturally bears the potential to trigger concern, apprehension, and anxiety among individuals and the society at large. In line with the dictionary and academic descriptions discussed earlier, these concerns and apprehensions can also alternatively be understood in terms of fear.

This of course is not to suggest that both Locke and Hobbes equally emphasize the power of fear in determining the social order, but merely to point out that both conceptualizations accommodate the element of fear. There is a fundamental difference between Hobbesian fear and the Lockean framework that grants room to fear. Where the Lockean civil society is necessitated by the desire to regulate punishment, the Hobbesian leviathan is deemed essential to repudiate the perpetual condition of insecurity. The Hobbesian insecurity arises out of material (vulnerability of individual possessions and transactions) and mental (existential anxiety) fears, whereas in a Lockean framework, fear is not a given but could materialize if an

individual steps out of bounds of his own right of self-preservation and infringes those of others.

The point I am trying to make here is that a Lockean conception of society is not completely devoid of fear. Irrespective of whether we live in Hobbesian leviathan or Lockean civil society, the condition of fear, in one way or another, will always be present.

A Hobbesian state or leviathan is thus necessitated by the material and mental insecurities that tower above everything else in a state of nature. And the leviathan primarily seeks to tame, control, and manage fear that emerges from these insecurities through creating a stable social order. On the other hand, the Lockean civil society is a result of pragmatic consent to homogenize the exercise of the right of punishment in the event of transgression. This civil society is also intended to create a stable and sustainable social order where people free from the fear and anxiety of transgression can exercise their right of self-preservation.

This however does not mean that the establishment of leviathan or civil society will rid the world altogether of fear from insecurities and transgression. On the contrary, both forms of societies are recommended because they are considered better at managing these problems than the state of nature. Furthermore, even though fear will be present in both forms of societies, it will be greatly intensified if there is an attempt to destabilize the existing social orders. This means that if there is an existential threat to either leviathan or civil society, it may signal a return to the state of nature, which would consequently amplify the existing fear and anxiety. In other words, any challenge to the existing social order will trigger an individual's pre-existing fear and insecurities.

Samuel Scheffler's work in this vein is particularly insightful. He utilizes the Hobbesian framework to explain how terrorism functions. In agreement with Hobbes, Scheffler points out that people form societies because they want to escape from fear as 'it is only within a stable political society that the miserable condition of unremitting fear can be kept at bay' (2006: 5). He argues that the 'terrorists take these Hobbesian insights to heart' as 'they engage in violence against some people in order to induce fear or terror in others, with the aim of destabilizing or degrading (or threatening to destabilize or degrade) an existing social order' (Ibid). Scheffler refers

to this as ‘terrorism of the standard kind’, which is made possible because of the ‘coercive power of fear’ (p. 6).

Scheffler believes that his conceptualization of standard terrorism is independent of the actor, permitting therefore both state and non-state actors to practice it. And although a state actor may use this standard kind against other states (to destabilize them and generate fear), it cannot by default use it against its own citizens. This is because a state always wants to maintain or retain an existing social order at least within its own boundaries. However, Scheffler believes that a state (and also some extreme right wing non-state actors) may still use terror and fear to ‘keep people afraid as a way of maintaining its grip on power and preserving the established system’ although this will not amount to terrorism of the standard kind (p. 13). Nevertheless, whether there are attempts to destabilize or stabilize a pre-existing social order, the key, according to Scheffler, is the exploitation of the mechanism of fear (p. 15).

In a discussion on terror and fear it is normal for scholars to engage primarily with Hobbes since he is regarded by many academics as the most prolific scholar of fear. The question that arises here is: do we need to view the world through the Hobbesian lens to understand the instrumentality of fear? Or must we live in the Hobbesian leviathan or state of nature to experience fear? The discussion above has shown that this need not be so. The condition of fear (no matter how vague) can even be experienced in a Lockean worldview, which can otherwise be regarded as antithesis of Hobbesian work.<sup>10</sup> There is no denying that fear is of paramount importance to Hobbesian philosophy, but just because Locke challenges Hobbes’s most central assumptions does not mean that the element of fear is altogether absent from his own conceptualization of society. What can reasonably be argued however is that where fear would primarily be deliberate in a Hobbesian state, in a Lockean state it could be the unintended consequence of certain actions. It is important to clarify and explain this assertion in greater detail.

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Carl Becker and Merle Curti pointed out that the ideas of the two men [Hobbes and Lockes] were antithetical’ (quoted in Van Mobley, 1996: 6).



‘Deliberate’ generation of fear has been one of the central themes in the terrorism discourse for a very long time. In a Hobbesian state an actor willing to affect the social life of its individuals in some manner could use the mechanics of fear to his advantage. This could be done though exploiting the Hobbesian insecurities, material and mental, sketched out earlier in the paper. Through evoking these insecurities, the actor will be able to generate a climate of intense fear and anxiety (terror) in the desired society. It is not just the mere knowledge but also the centrality of fear in a Hobbesian society that permits its deliberate employment.

On the other hand, in a Lockean state, fear is perhaps best understood not as an independent reality but as a byproduct of the rights of self-preservation and punishment. Unlike the Hobbesian state, a Lockean framework does not assume a war of all against all and its individuals are not subject to a continuous fear of death and existential anxiety. Where high levels of mortality salience reinforces the existential anxiety in a Hobbesian individual, forcing him to live in a constant state of fear, a Lockean individual does not live under the constant shadow of such heightened and exaggerated condition of fear and insecurity. However, the Lockean right of punishment by its nature does allow a permissibility of transgression, where the rights of others could involuntarily be infringed. It is this permissibility or possibility of transgression, which may inadvertently generate fear.

Thus, in a Lockean state, although it may not be a deliberate intention, but when rights are infringed and the existing social life is undermined then fear will inadvertently be generated. It is important to note here that I have used the term social life and not social order that is undermined. The notion of social life is different from social order, which not only better explains how fear generation is independent of stabilization or destabilization of an existing order but also facilitates a greater appreciation of the Hobbesian and Lockean frameworks.

A ‘social order’ specifically refers to an established authority such as Hobbes’s Leviathan or Locke’s civil society, whereas ‘social life’ broadly corresponds to the existing society and could therefore refer to both established authority and the state of nature. When fear is generated through destabilization of an existing social order, it threatens a return to the state of nature through challenging and undermining the established authority. Under such circumstances, a Hobbesian and Lockean

explanation is quite straightforward, as it would be true for state and especially non-state actors that challenge the authority of either the leviathan or civil society. The notion of social order largely fails to account for state and even non-state actors that aim to stabilize or preserve it. This explains why Scheffler sees attempts to generate fear through destabilizing an existing system as standard or textbook terrorism (since it fits comfortably with his Hobbesian model) and instances of fear generation with the intention of preserving an order as what could only be termed as nonstandard terrorism.

At first glance, an attempt to preserve an existing order does not sit well with a Hobbesian and Lockean framework. An established order represents stability and security so why would its preservation lead to generation of fear? The key here is to focus on social life and not social order. The notion of social life, unlike social order, corresponds to both state of nature and established authority. Social life will therefore be affected and undermined regardless of whether there are attempts to stabilize or destabilize an existing order. And since this view also accommodates both state of nature and established authority, it is therefore also consistent with both the Hobbesian and Lockean frameworks.

To sum up, this discussion has shown how generation of fear is independent of the two most dominant conceptions of society- Hobbesian and Lockean. Admittedly there is great difference of degree and emphasis, however, whether an absolute necessity (Hobbes) or an outcome of a pragmatic undertaking (Locke), both conceptualizations, to varying degrees, accommodate the element of fear. Furthermore, it has also been shown that where the Hobbesian model better explains deliberate generation of fear, the Lockean model can account for unintentional generation of fear. And lastly, it has been argued that it is not necessary to always challenge the existing social order to generate fear, a challenge to the social life should suffice.

By discerning the philosophical roots of fear, this chapter has shown how an act of terror can undermine social life and consequently generate fear. Hobbesian and Lockean frameworks provide us with the necessary philosophical tools to understand how fear is produced in a society. These two frameworks have been utilized not only because they are two of the most important philosophical positions in political theory

but also because they broadly correspond to the dominant conceptions of society- realist and idealist respectively.

Fear can be generated irrespective of whether one has a Hobbesian or a Lockean conception of society. The question therefore is not whether terror or fear will be generated, but whether such generation of fear is deliberate or not. Although judging the exact intention of the perpetrator will always remain somewhat problematic, given that it is not possible to read the mind of the actor- the Hobbesian and Lockean frameworks, however, do provide a sound philosophical explanation for intentional and unintentional use of terror respectively.

According to Hobbesian logic, fear could deliberately be employed to exploit the mental and material insecurities for one's advantage. On the other hand, in a Lockean state, fear could be the unintended consequence of exercising the rights of self-preservation and punishment. Thus, where the Hobbesian conception could account for deliberate generation of fear, the Lockean model can adequately explain when it is not.

Whether it is the Hobbesian mental and material insecurities that are undermined or Lockean right of self-preservation that is breached, social life will be affected and consequently fear will be generated. Since an act of terrorism always effects or undermines the prevailing social life, fear will subsequently be generated. Terror, therefore, is central to terrorism irrespective of whether it is ultimately deliberate or an unintended by-product.

## **2. Victim**

Over the years the category of victim of terrorism has been a matter of intense scrutiny, controversy, and fascination. It is the epicentre of the moral problem, which many hold to be primarily responsible for the existing definitional and conceptual impasse. Terms like innocent, civilian, and non-combatants are commonplace and have become somewhat mundane in the terrorism discourse. In spite of the banality of these terms, any definitional and conceptual pursuit of terrorism is not only incomplete but also positively meaningless without a thorough and formal engagement with them. Owing to the extensive interplay between the victim of terrorism and the moral debate, it is imperative to first gain greater and deeper insight into the moral problem itself.

### **The Moral Problem**

Grant Wardlaw succinctly asserted over two decades ago that ‘A major stumbling block to the serious study of terrorism is that, at base, terrorism is a moral problem’ (1989: 4). Similarly, Sproat also asserts that ‘At the heart of any analysis is the fact that terrorism is seen primarily as a moral problem’ (1991: 20). The question is what do we mean when we say that terrorism is a moral problem? The problem mainly concerns the justification of terrorist violence. However, this deceptively straightforward conundrum is not only ‘one of the major reasons for the difficulty over the definition of terrorism’ (Wardlaw, 1991: 4) but is also primarily responsible for the conflicting and opposing academic positions in the terrorism scholarship.

Wars and basically all forms of violence in general involve some form of harm, killing or destruction and are therefore intrinsically bad. Their justification, however, and whether they can be right or wrong is a different matter altogether. In other words, being bad does not necessarily entail wrongness. Natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions can also cause great damage and destruction and are therefore often regarded as bad. However, in spite of the deaths

and destructions such natural disasters may cause, we cannot speak of them as right or wrong or just or unjust (Holmes, 1989: 192). Judgment on whether something is right or wrong is reserved exclusively for man-made activities. Hence, even though everyone will generally agree that all forms of violence are, in one sense or another bad, they can still speak of them as being right or justified. It is this practice of judging human activities right or wrong that gives birth to the subject of morality. And since judgments generally have a tendency to be subjective, we find different and often conflicting moral positions.

Terrorism is a social activity and social activities, by virtue of their nature, are prone to different or even opposing subjective interpretations (provided of course one views the world through an interpretivist or constructivist lens). The problem with terrorism, however, is that these subjective interpretations greatly impede its understanding, as each approach tends to pull terrorism in a completely different direction. It is important therefore to not only understand the underlying logic of these conflicting positions but also contextualize them appositely to not only better understand the problem but also to structure and discipline the terrorism discourse.

All moral positions normally adhere to either utilitarian or deontological normative ethical theories. According to the utilitarian logic, the rightness and wrongness of the actions are determined on the basis of their outcome. From this viewpoint, violence may be regarded unfortunate but necessary if it achieves a certain desirable goal. A deontological approach, on the other hand, is not concerned with the consequences but with the actions themselves. If the actions are wrong then the outcome (irrespective of how noble or just) is irrelevant (Held, 2008: 4-5). Although strict adherence is not uncommon in the terrorism discourse, most scholars espouse these normative ethical theories to varying degrees. To better understand the overall terrorism scholarship, we will do well to imagine a moral continuum along which we can place these different moral positions.

### ***The moral continuum***

At one end of our moral continuum, there are scholars who believe that there can never be any justification for terrorist violence. Terrorism is believed to be prime

facie evil, wrong, and always unjustified. Immorality and wrongness is considered an integral part of the term's vocabulary and any attempt to study and observe terrorism differently is largely viewed with scepticism and regarded as an etymological and semantic contradiction (See e.g. Walzer, 1977; Rodin, 2004; Scheffler, 2006; Miesels, 2008). We can call this the *amoral position* to terrorism. Adherents of this position hold that terrorism is bad, wrong, and can never be justified.

At the other end of the continuum, there are scholars who believe that terrorism, just like other forms of violence, can be justified. They are highly critical of the view that terrorism by definition should be wrong, evil, and unjustified. They regard the practice of treating terrorism immoral as normatively unhelpful and analytically obstructive. Although far from exclusive, most of the critical scholars in the terrorism scholarship would fall in this camp (See e.g. Burke, 2008; Jackson, 2009; Dexter, 2011). This position can be called the *moral position* to terrorism. Advocates of this position do not contest that terrorism is bad but argue that it is no worse than other forms of violence. What they do contest strongly, however, is the notion that terrorism is inherently and egregiously wrong by nature, and make the strongest case for its justification.<sup>11</sup>

These two positions have long prompted a debate in the discourse regarding whether terrorism should be considered wrong and immoral by definition. The issue of whether wrongness should be part of the definition of terrorism is an important one. When wrongness is not part of the definition of any form of violence, then a case can be made for its justification. On the other hand, it will be very difficult to make the same case for some form of violence if it was deemed wrong by definition. As Holmes notes that one can make a justificatory case for war, killings, and basically 'any other type of action whose wrongness is not part of its very definition from the outset' (1989: 212).

Scholars that adhere strictly to the amoral position believe that terrorism is prime facie wrong, evil and immoral and should therefore be defined or at least understood

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<sup>11</sup> The two positions have been categorized as moral and amoral purely because of their respective attitudes towards terrorism. Where a moral position is occasionally empathetic to terrorist violence and grants it a justificatory space, an amoral position in comparison, shows no such compassion or extends no leniency to either terrorism or terrorists.

as such. As Caleb Carr notes, ‘terrorism is among mankind’s most outrageously unacceptable belligerent practices’ (2007: 48). The charge against terrorism was chiefly spearheaded by one of the most influential scholars in the field, Paul Wilkinson. He takes a ‘determined moral position against the use of terrorism’ and argues that it is ‘morally indefensible’ as he believes there are other less or non-violent alternatives, such as civil disobedience and political participation (2000: 218). Following his footsteps, many other scholars also believe that terrorism is fundamentally wrong and the characteristic must therefore be reflected in the definition of term.

Adherents of the amoral position additionally argue that the widespread common understanding of terrorism is that it is egregiously bad, wrong and always unjustified. Therefore any academic conceptualization of terrorism that does not reflect this reality will be disconnected from common and popular understanding of the term. As Meisels points out, ‘An adequate definition of terrorism, if it is to have any connection with common usage, must describe at least a *prime facie* wrong and seek to further our understanding of this term by bringing out what it is that makes terrorism morally repugnant to most of us’ (2008: 19). In similar vein, Rodin also notes that reactions to terrorism are ‘undeniably negative’ as ‘most of us regard acts of terrorism with abhorrence’ and that ‘There is certainly truth in the thought that wrongness is part of the meaning of terrorism’ (2004: 753). To define or conceptualize terrorism otherwise is therefore believed to be erroneous and regarded as an attempt to uproot the core and commonly understood meaning of the term (Rigstad, 2008: 76).

This approach is challenged by what has earlier been described as the moral position. Heralded mainly by critical scholars in the field, this position is strongly against defining and conceptualizing terrorism as inherently wrong and immoral. Teichman for instance argues that terrorism ought not to be defined as a bad thing, as otherwise we risk compromising ‘certain important historical and linguistic facts’ (1989: 507). He also rejects attempts to define terrorism in light of ordinary usage of the term citing ordinary usage as much too wide and unhelpfully subjective (p. 505-506). McPherson calls the amoral view of terrorism as ‘the dominant view’ and criticizes it strongly. He suggests that the ‘distinctive wrongness of terrorism is not as obvious as

proponents of the dominant view believe' and goes on to propose what he believes to be a morally neutral definition of terrorism (2007: 525).

This distinction between the moral and amoral position is of course far from exclusive. It is merely demonstrative of the two extreme moral viewpoints that can be taken with regard to terrorism. There are numerous scholars that take neither of the extremes and fall roughly in between the two. Depending on their respective moral proclivity, they can either be classed as passive moral or passive amoral. A position that tends to lean more towards the amoral position can be categorized as passive amoral, whereas a position that appears to be closer to the moral absolute can be classified as a passive moral position.

Igor Primoratz's approach to terrorism provides a classic example of a passive amoral position. He is critical of scholars such as Wilkinson because of their 'claim that terrorism is essentially amoral' (2004: 23). He puts forward, what he believes to be, a morally neutral definition of terrorism as it 'entails only that terrorism is *prime facie* wrong, and thus does not rule out its justification under certain circumstances' (p. 24). Scheffler's approach to terrorism provides another case in point. He believes that 'terrorism is a *prime facie* evil' but at the same time does not rule out the possibility of instances where it can be justified (2006: 1-2). Thus, adherents of passive amoral position mainly argue that terrorism is bad and also wrong but at the same time can also be justified in certain circumstances.

On the other hand, Coady's conceptualization of the terrorism problem is typical of the passive moral position. He does not believe that terrorism is necessarily *prime facie* evil or wrong and argues that terrorism in fact can sometimes be 'morally permissible'. Coady compares terrorism to the act of lying, which he argues is generally considered to be bad but can still be permissible, justified or even commendable in certain circumstances (2004: 58). Virginia Held's position is another case in point. Held is particularly critical of scholars that treat terrorism as evil and immoral. She argues that terrorism is not necessarily worse than war or other kinds of violence. And just as 'some wars can be justified, so can some forms of terrorism' (2004: 70). She also believes that the question whether terrorism can be justified 'should be open [and] not ruled out by definition' (2008: 80). Advocates of the



passive moral position then accept that terrorism is bad, but remain agnostic over the question of whether it is fundamentally wrong and unjustified.

To sum up then, the different academic positions to terrorism can be determined primarily by how they approach the issue of morality and justification respectively. The absolute amoral position sees a strong causal relationship between morality and justification, with both reinforcing each other. The absolute moral position on the other hand sees no such relationship between morality and justification and treats the two independent of one another. The passive approaches, however, find the line between morality and justification somewhat blurry and regard any relationship between the two as dependent on different situational and contextual variables.<sup>12</sup>

Now the question that arises here is why are there such opposing positions on the morality and justification of terrorism? Part of the answer lies in the subjective nature of terrorism itself as scholars focusing on different attributes of the phenomenon end up supporting different moral standpoints (not to mention the subjectivity of the scholars themselves). The other part of the answer lies in the criticism and condemnation that the term terrorism typically evokes.

Just as some natural disasters are worse than others, so are some forms of violence. The yardstick for measuring the scale of how bad a natural disaster is usually through the death and destruction that results in its wake. The more destructive a natural disaster, the more it will be deemed bad. The same, however, cannot be said for different forms of violence- even though logic would dictate that the same standards be applied to all man-made disasters. Terrorism, particularly, in terms of the casualties it causes and the subsequent criticism (or even the praise) it generates has been fairly inconsistent. This disproportionate condemnation has in fact become somewhat characteristic of terrorism. It is also perhaps the single most important reason why so many scholars end up taking different moral positions. Since this disproportionate criticism that terrorism evokes is typically insinuated through its condemnatory overtone, therefore in order to understand the problem in its entirety, it is important to engage directly with terrorism's pejorative undertone.

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<sup>12</sup> These different moral positions will be further developed in Chapter 6.

### ***Terrorism's Pejorative Undertone***

Perhaps the most important facet of the moral problem is the pejorative and negative connotation that the term terrorism has acquired over the years. There is a broad consensus among scholars that terrorism is a pejorative term as Hoffman notes 'on one point, at least everyone agrees: terrorism is a pejorative term' (2006: 23). The pejorative undertone of terrorism mainly entails that terrorism is an emotionally charged value laden term with a strong disapproving undertone, which whenever used automatically gives a moral verdict over the act under question. In other words, the use of the term terrorism delegitimizes the rationale it serves. This encourages its rhetorical use as the word terrorism is used as a linguistic tool to denounce one's opponent, usually for some relative political advantage. The pejorative undertone is fairly characteristic of terrorism and has gained significant currency in the discourse. Given its importance in the terrorism scholarship and its bearing on the moral problem more generally, it is essential therefore to discuss it in detail.

To do this, it is important first to briefly analyze the relationship between wrongness and pejorative undertone. Understandably the two terms are deeply interconnected as the word pejorative entails contempt and disapproval, which can only be expressed at something that is profoundly wrong and intrinsically bad. Suggesting something wrong (or immoral) is generally relational and typically dependent on certain observable facts. This means that wrongness should follow after some kind of harm has either been inflicted or threatened with. This wrongness, logically speaking, must also be directly proportional to the infliction of the actual harm or a credible threat of such (the actual harm being more wrong than its threat). Hence, in the event a certain harm is inflicted, the incident will first have to be deemed wrong, followed by an apposite condemnatory or pejorative description.

In other words, an incident or a certain occurrence, at least in principle, should only be condemned and described with some pejorative word after its wrongness or immorality has been established or confirmed. Various forms of violence such as genocide appear to follow similar trajectory. Genocide, much like terrorism, is an emotionally charged word with a derogatory and pejorative undertone that delegitimizes and denounces any actor or action. Unlike terrorism, however, the term genocide cannot be employed at discretion. The word genocide is generally not used

unless it is evident that a certain number of casualties have either already taken place or that there is a credible threat of such.

Thus the word genocide will only be used to describe the wrongness of a certain harm that has either happened or likely to happen very soon. Genocide, by definition, demands a large number of casualties (or the credible threat of such) and the wrongness explicit in the word corresponds directly to the harm inflicted through such casualties. It therefore cannot and is mostly never applied to isolated incidents or empty threats.

In the case of terrorism, however, this is not always the case, as wrongness sometimes precedes an actual harm or its threat. Unlike genocide, terrorism is not dependent upon a certain number of casualties. The term terrorism can readily be applied to isolated incidents such as murders or assassinations of individuals. In fact, it will not be an exaggeration to suggest that terrorism's capacity for limited and restricted violence, as opposed to war and genocide for instance, plays to its disadvantage, as the term can be applied to various isolated or unrelated incidents or their threats. Such a propensity has given rise to the problem of political rhetoric whereby the term terrorism (rightly or wrongly) is used as a semantic device to denounce one's opponent. As Gearty points out, 'the word 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' have deteriorated into little more than terms of abuse' (1991: 4).

Terrorism when deemed inherently evil, deeply wrong, and profoundly immoral, concomitantly fails to lend any justificatory space to its practitioners. In other words, the word terrorism carries with it a disapproving undertone, an emotive punch, a censorious flavor and a negative judgment that renders its practitioner immoral and unjustified by definition. Arguably, under such circumstances, if an actor were to be labelled a terrorist (or charged with acts of terrorism), there would be little if at all any justificatory or moral space granted either to the actor or the actions. As O'Brien says, 'Terrorist is of course an emotive term, used to describe people seen as making an unjustifiable use of violence' (1977: 56).

Adherents of the moral position in particular believe that this pejorative connotation has reduced the term terrorism to a mere tool of political rhetoric, a labelling device utilized by political rivals against each other. In other words, the term terrorism is mainly used as a semantic tool to demonize and denounce one's opponent or enemy.

This to a large extent also explains the adage ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.’ The term freedom fighter as opposed to terrorist is a positive term and is therefore naturally the preferred choice of label. The two terms are mostly considered to be exclusive of each other with very little in common. A freedom fighter is believed to be someone that engages in just, moral, and legitimate violence. Practitioners of political violence (whether terrorist or not) therefore, if left to choose between the two labels terrorist and freedom fighter, would almost certainly prefer the latter.

Given this predicament, it is not surprising that labelling someone terrorist is deemed extremely problematic and often vastly controversial. It appears that the word terrorism, understood in this derogatory sense, is used to describe one’s enemies, just as one’s enemy reserves the term for its adversaries. This inconsistency prompted scholars like Greisman to suggest that terrorism has no objective reality and is essentially socially constructed by some social groups that possess greater ability than others to construct them.

Greisman utilizes Kenneth Burke’s concept of ‘identification’ to explain how designation of a certain act as terrorism is in fact dependent upon identification with either the perpetrators or the victims. ‘Terrorism’, Greisman argues, ‘with the potential for exciting negative sanctions, is susceptible to the relativism of situation and actors’ (1977: 303). If the audience or the spectators of terrorist acts identify with the perpetrators, then such ‘identification with the perpetrator effectively removes the terrorist meaning’ (Ibid). Terrorism, according to Greisman, will therefore only be present if the wider audience (one that determines the choice of the label) identifies with the direct victims of the act and not the perpetrators (p. 303-304). It can be further inferred that if the wider audience identifies instead with the perpetrator then the actor will either be called a freedom fighter or something else but not terrorist.

Hoffman, in similar vein, explains that the decision to call someone terrorist can be determined by ‘associational logic’. He believes that the criterion for the label terrorist is ‘unavoidably subjective, depending largely on whether one sympathizes with or opposes the person/group/cause concerned’ (2006: 23). An association with the victim would class the act as terrorism and the act would be regarded positive, or at worst, ambivalent, if one has some form of association with the perpetrator (Ibid).

The logic of both identification and association clearly shows how the term terrorism is intrinsically pejorative and unmistakably reserved for an actor or action one disapproves of. Kapitan suggests that the theoretical roots of such thinking are mainly Hobbesian. In line with the classical Hobbesian philosophy, one forms a political society to escape the very conditions that could otherwise be imposed by a terrorist. So a Hobbesian objection to terrorism is not about the 'method employed or the human cost as such, but the fact that the strike was against us'. This, Kapitan argues, helps explain a crucial semantic feature of the term terrorism, whereby 'the word takes on an indexical character, that is, there is an implicit reference to the speakers point of view, so that in general usage, 'terrorism' is actually coextensive with the phrase terrorism against us' (2002: 179). 'The term terrorism', Kapitan concludes, 'is simply the current vogue for discrediting one's opponents' (Ibid).

If the term indeed possesses this indexical character and is merely a fad to bring one's opponent into disrepute then the word terrorism perhaps is nothing more than a mere tool of political rhetoric and name calling that has no real descriptive value. As Gearty points out, 'To call an act of violence a terrorist act is not so much to describe it as condemn it, subjugating all questions of context and circumstance to the reality of its immorality' (1997: 11). If this is indeed the case, then any conceptual or definitional pursuit of terrorism will be a futile exercise bound to lead to controversy and impasse. From a scholarly point of view the issue of political rhetoric therefore raises serious problems for scientific inquiry into terrorism.

In spite of its discouraging premise, the rhetorical use of terrorism should not prevent scholars from studying terrorism. The rhetorical use itself can be immensely helpful in understanding the divergent political positions, identity politics, role of metanarratives and much more. It is, however, of little help when it comes to theoretical and definitional development.

Some scholars may disagree with this position arguing instead that political rhetoric is fundamental to terrorism and could therefore greatly contribute to its understanding. Rigstad, for instance, suggests that the rhetoric of terrorism could in fact be helpful for definitional purposes. He argues that the 'rhetorical back-and-forth shows the expressive flexibility of the concept' and the 'reciprocal accusations of terrorist violence provide the key to theoretical consensus and conceptual mediation' (2008:

88). Thus, during any conflict, the conflicting parties in question try to invoke similar ethical values when condemning each other. This mutual condemnation of each other's actions, Rigstad argues, provides us with the 'ethical common denominator that unifies competing accusations of terrorism' (p. 89).

There are, however, some serious problems with what otherwise appears to be a straightforward solution to the rhetorical problem of terrorism. First, it is not always a given that the conflicting parties will necessarily evoke the same ethical values in their mutual condemnation of each other's actions. One cannot reasonably deny the possibility or the probability that the concerned conflicting parties could potentially criticize and evoke dissimilar values.

Second, in asymmetrical conflicts, where one of the parties is always stronger than the other, any mutual accusation will always be disproportionate to the scale and scope of their relative capacities. A stronger party in a certain conflict, for instance, will have greater resources and can therefore cause more harm than its weaker counterpart. Any reciprocal criticism of each other thereof could be inequitable or even unjust considering that one party could potentially cause greater damage and deserve greater criticism than the other.

Third, all conflicts concurrently also produce a parallel war of rhetoric and narratives. This means that a side, which is stronger and better at constructing narratives, will have a clear advantage in influencing the wider or outside perception of the conflict. The so-called common ethical denominator will therefore be skewed in favor of one of the conflicting parties. Hence, if we give into the rhetoric then either the party which is better at advertising and projecting its position or the wider audience that identifies or approves of certain rhetoric could potentially contaminate our study or understanding of terrorism.

Fourth, in any conflict, it is entirely plausible that one of the parties is completely innocent of any wrongdoing. In such a case, the rhetoric of the innocent party is perhaps not a rhetoric at all but in fact a genuine outcry against some systematic injustice. To treat its outcry rhetorical, and worse still, compare it with the rhetoric of its oppressor would not only be downright eccentric but also colossally misleading.

Lastly, in the political realm, any criticism of opposition, no matter how justified, will often be predisposed to arrive at a prejudicial position. Since, essentially all political rhetorics carry a flavor of bias, an examination of reciprocal accusations, far from unifying competing accusations, could end up being an analysis of only respective biases.

The importance of political rhetoric to terrorism is certainly undeniable. However, its utility for theoretical and definitional development is a different matter altogether. A rhetorical use of terrorism reduces the term to a mere name-calling device, which conflicting parties may utilize to denounce one another. In a sense, a rhetorical blame game is often more reflective of individual political preferences and prejudices than anything conceptually substantive.

Such rhetorical back and forth, in effect, renders all descriptive and analytical pursuit of terrorism somewhat pointless. In spite of any contrary claims therefore, any definitional pursuit through political rhetoric will be a useless and futile exercise. As Kapitan notes, 'The prevalent rhetoric of 'terrorism' has not provided an intelligent response to the problem of terrorism' (2002: 183-184). Hence, any attempt to define terrorism in light of its rhetoric will be nothing more than 'an exercise in political classification' (Brannan et al., 2001: 11) that will subsequently end up being a 'wider contest between various political actors, ideologies and objectives' (Sproat, 1991: 20). It is for this reason that the issue of politicizing and inferences drawn from any rhetorical usage of the term will be left out of this thesis. However, before we conclude this argument, it is important to make one final distinction between the pejorative undertone and the rhetorical use of terrorism.

Although it is the pejorative undertone of the term that encourages its rhetorical use, it is important that the two are not treated as synonyms. Where the rhetoric it generates is a political tool and not important or useful for conceptualizing terrorism, the pejorative trait itself is simply indispensable for several obvious reasons. Firstly, it helps us understand, outline, and better structure the already discussed different moral positions in the discourse and is therefore extremely vital for a fuller appreciation of the all important moral problem of terrorism. Secondly, this derogatory use of the term is considered by many academics to be a unique characteristic of terrorism that helps distinguish terrorism. Terms like guerrilla warfare, insurgency, and riots e.g. are

thought to enjoy a somewhat neutral undertone while terrorism's negative connotation in comparison is deemed distinctive (See e.g. Hoffman, 2006; Guelke, 2006).

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, no serious discussion on terrorism is complete without a reference to its pejorative undertone. Whether one agrees on it or not, the pejorative undertone of terrorism is deeply embedded in our conscience. And for that reason, it has had a profound impact on all other characteristics advanced in the discourse. Hence, in order to fully understand all these other characteristics, it is extremely important to accord due attention to the pejorative undertone.

Having outlined the moral debate and the pejorative undertone of terrorism, we shall now turn our attention to the central problem- the victim of terrorism.

### **The victim of terrorism**

The victim of terrorism broadly refers to the recipient of terrorist violence or its threat. Although the category of recipient generally translates into the victim of terrorism, there is a difference between the two. This is because terrorism typically addresses not one but multiple audiences (See e.g. Hoffman, 2006; Schmid, 2011). These audiences can be categorized as primary, secondary and tertiary.<sup>13</sup> The primary and secondary audiences have a close proximity with terrorist violence and are the two that are actually threatened by it. The tertiary audience translates into a distant bystander that is not in anyway threatened by the terrorist violence but is still affected by it.

A tertiary audience is basically one that enjoys a physical separation and is not directly part of the conflict involving terrorism.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it can inadvertently still get affected by it through news media. However, since it is not threatened by terrorism in any direct or even indirect sense, it will be left out of our discussion.

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note here that the terrorism literature generally identifies only two audiences, one that is directly targeted and the other that is psychologically affected by it.

<sup>14</sup> It is possible for a tertiary audience to have an indirect (or even direct) involvement in the conflict, but the physical distance may make it close to impossible to be a target of any terrorist violence. Although in case of any involvement, the threat of terrorism cannot be completely ruled out.



Instead, the focus will be on the primary and secondary victims of terrorism that are threatened directly or indirectly by terrorist violence.

Although most academics generally agree that the victim of terrorism are principally people, there are some who argue that terrorist violence can also be directed against infrastructure. Coady for instance argues that ‘certain types of severe attacks on property’ that do not endanger human life, such as destruction of a civil airplane, could potentially count as terrorism, although Coady maintains that the property must belong to non-combatants (1985: 52). Valls agrees with Coady and believes that ‘violence can include damage to property as well as harm to people’ and points out that ‘Blowing up a power plant’ for instance ‘can surely be an act of terrorism, even if no one is injured’ (2000: 67). Schbley notes that attacks on civilian property should constitute terrorism (2003: 107). Kaplan, in similar vein, points out that terrorists, other than targeting people, can also target property and societal structures that have some symbolic significance (2009: 185).

Many other scholars, however, are somewhat sceptical of this view. Teichman for instance argues that destruction of property should not be considered terrorism ‘unless it is a precursor of a different kind of action i.e. part of a campaign which includes physically harming human beings’ (1989: 512). Primoratz agrees with Teichman and believes that an act would only be terrorism if it threatens people’s lives in some way and not otherwise (2004: 20). Held is particularly critical of categorizing attacks on property as terrorism. She is of the view that property damage should not even be considered violence because ‘violence can be defined as actions usually sudden, that predictably and coercively inflicts injury upon or damage that harms a person’ (2008: 127). Held suggests that damage to property should only be considered violence ‘insofar as it risks injury or harm to people’ (Ibid).

It is indeed difficult, perhaps even impossible, to categorize (attacks on) property as a victim of terrorism for obvious semantic and aesthetic reasons. However semantics aside, there are still major problems with categorizing attacks on property as terrorism. To start with, clearly there must be some difference between attacks on property and people. Most people would agree that there is no moral equivalence between the two. An isolated attack on property that poses no visible threat to people (such as blowing up an empty civil airplane or a power plant) and is in fact carefully

orchestrated to avoid any casualty is clearly very different from an attack that is directed towards people or results in human casualty. To call both by the same name will not only be confusing but also profoundly unfair.

It can of course be argued that since terrorism is essentially a psychological form of warfare, therefore, it is its psychological impact that should matter, and whether this impact is achieved through targeting property or people should be beside the point. However, where it is understandably very difficult to discern exact psychological impacts and emotional responses, there is an unmistakable and undeniable difference between an impact created by attacks on property and attacks on people. The emotional and psychological response to human victims will undeniably be far greater than any property destruction, especially if that attack poses no threat to human life.

Furthermore, if an attack on property is deemed terroristic then how is terrorism any different from ordinary acts of vandalism? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, vandalism is defined as ‘destruction of or damage to public or private property’.<sup>15</sup> Clearly if terrorism is understood in terms of attacks on both property and people, ordinary acts of vandalism could easily be categorized as terrorist acts. This of course is not a problem if one believes that acts of vandalism can be terrorism. But such a position will be painstakingly difficult to defend, especially because vandalism can easily do without what most of us believe to be terrorism’s indispensable attributes: psychological impact and political motivation.

In light of this discussion, it can reasonably be concluded that the victims of terrorism must be people and an attack on property could be considered terrorism only if it directly threatens human life in some way and not otherwise.

If it is established that the victims of terrorism are essentially people then is it possible to identify and denote a specific class of individuals? It is this question that we shall now turn our attention to.

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<sup>15</sup> Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/vandalism>. Accessed on: July 04 2015.

### ***The three categories of victim***

Narrowing down the category of victim to people, though somewhat helpful, hardly makes terrorism distinctive in any meaningful way. Since most forms of violence involve some kind of harm or injury to people. The question of whether terrorism only targets a certain class of individuals has been a source of great concern for academics over the years. It is an especially pertinent subject for those who believe that the category of victim should be a defining characteristic of terrorism.

The victim of terrorism as mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, is intrinsically tied to the morality of terrorism. The different categories of victim advanced in the discourse often reflect a certain moral viewpoint. It is particularly in relation to a certain category of victim (in combination with different variables) that we can better discern and understand the moral and the amoral positions discussed earlier in the chapter.

There are mainly three categories of victim that are normally put forward in the discourse: civilian, non-combatant, and innocent. As both the categories of civilian and non-combatant have roots in the just war tradition, it is helpful to discuss the two at the same time.

### ***Civilian and non-combatant***

It is perhaps not an overstatement that among all the different categories of victim, the one used most frequently and regularly in both academic and non-academic sources is the category of civilian. This frequency of usage, however, is not necessarily suggestive of the term's acceptability but possibly more so indicative of a choice of convenience.<sup>16</sup> Another common practice is to use both the categories of civilian and non-combatant, which as this discussion will show, is not only inaccurate but also unnecessary. To make sense of the categories of civilian and non-combatant and understand how they gained currency, we must appreciate where the terms come from and that entails a brief examination of the just war theory.

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<sup>16</sup> As civilian is a convenient label to distinguish ordinary people from military personnel.

Although questions can and have been raised over the application of the just war criterion to terrorism (See e.g. Goodin, 2006; Held, 2008), the categories of victim cannot be adequately explained and contextualized without formal engagement with the theory. Some authors believe that it is somewhat misleading to speak of just war as a theory and prefer to use the word tradition instead. As Valls points out that just war ‘is not a single theory but, rather, a tradition within which there is a range of interpretation’ (2000: 68). Schwenkenbecher also believes that ‘it is more accurate to speak of the just war tradition instead of just war theory, as the corresponding ideas have evolved over many centuries, millenniums in fact’ (2012: 76). It indeed makes sense to speak of just war as a tradition so as to lend it the necessary flexibility to be applied outside the strict context of war.

Just war fundamentally concerns the ethics and morality of war, which has been developed through the ages to determine and judge the cause and conduct of different violent encounters. Following particularly the devastating events of the twentieth century (such as carpet bombing of the German cities, the Nazi holocaust, and the use of nuclear bombs against Japan) the tradition of just war received significant renewed impetus and attention (Rengger, 2013: 81-82).

The development of the tradition itself goes back to the early medieval times with Western Christianity often credited for formally establishing the practice, as Anthony Lang notes, ‘the tradition is fundamentally a Christian one’ (2009: 202). Early thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Grotius are considered to be the founders of this tradition. Orend, McMahan, and Walzer in particular are regarded as the ‘most salient contemporary philosophers continuing this tradition today’ (Schwenkenbecher, 2012: 76). In spite of being widely regarded as essentially a Christian tradition, questions over the ethics and morality of war have featured extensively in almost all other religions and traditions. As Nicholas Rengger succinctly asserts ‘normative attitudes on what it is permissible to do in war are features of virtually every culture and time period’ (2013: 69).

Just war has two main tenets: *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. *Jus ad bellum* concerns justification regarding the reason to resort to war. It further comprises just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, and the probability of success (Valls, 2000: 68-74). *Jus in bello*, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the conduct

of war or in Walzer's words it signifies the observance of 'positive rules of engagement' (2000: 21). It further encompasses two main elements: proportionality and discrimination (Valls, 2000: 75-77). The just war tradition, in the form of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* provides a combination of deontological and consequentialist considerations for assessing the morality of war (Schwenkenbecher, 2012: 76). Both these tenets of just war and their respective elements have featured, in form or another, in various other cultures and contexts. It is generally believed that for a war to be just, it must satisfy all the conditions set forth by both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. The same logic is also extended to terrorism.

*Jus ad bellum* with its emphasis on legitimacy and probability of success corresponds broadly to the consequentialist or utilitarian position. Traditionally terrorism has not struggled much at meeting the provisions set forth by *jus ad bellum*. Even if we were to evaluate terrorism at the non-state level, it will probably still not face much qualm in satisfying most, if not all, of the conditions. Many terrorist groups, particularly the nationalist and certain leftwing groups, have a just cause, the right intention, and resort mostly to violence as a last resort. Arguably they do struggle somewhat over the issue of legitimacy and chances of success, but these two attributes are fairly contested and do not, at least from an academic standpoint, pose an insurmountable challenge as far as justification of terrorist violence is concerned.<sup>17</sup>

*Jus in bello*, on the other hand, with its conditions of proportionality and discrimination draws mainly from the deontological position and has long been a point of concern for the justification of terrorist violence. As a tradition developed out of conventional wars, *jus in bello*, envisages two or more conflicting parties confronting each other. The conflicting parties ideally make an explicit declaration of war as the designated men that make up the combating force fight it out in open pitched battles. The designated combat forces of the conflicting parties are required to distinguish themselves with uniforms and emblems of their respective country or faction. These distinguished combating forces are called combatants and if the standards of just war are to be upheld, then the conflicting parties on all sides must only attack and target combatants.

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<sup>17</sup> The issue of legitimate authority and chances of success along with other utilitarian considerations will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

If anyone other than the combatants is targeted then that, at least in principle, breaks the just war convention. All other people that are not combatants i.e. not a member of the officially designated combating force are categorized as civilians. The jus in bello principle of discrimination calls for a clear distinction between what it considers to be acceptable (combatants) and unacceptable (civilian) targets. Thus jus in bello, with its condition of discrimination, identifies a class of people to which it extends immunity from any kind of attack. The notion of immunity is central to the just war doctrine. People by virtue of being civilians are, at least in theory, immune from any violent and belligerent activity.

The distinction between combatant and civilian, however, is far from straightforward and strewn with problems. A civilian in simple terms is anyone who is formally not part of the military establishment. This means that anyone who's even vaguely connected with the military, in principle, does not qualify for the civilian label and should therefore be a legitimate target of violence.

However, it is common knowledge that not everyone associated with the military is actively engaged in combat. The military complex employs a range of workforce like medical personnel, cleaning and clerical staff, technical workers etc. Then there is of course the additional quandary concerning off-duty and ex- servicemen. Lastly, one of the pre-conditions of just war is formal declaration of war and active deployment of forces, failing which even the active armed personnel cannot be combatants in the strict sense of the term.

It becomes obvious that a failure to qualify for the civilian label does not automatically make one combatant. The category of civilian is therefore perhaps too vague and indistinct to be of any useful descriptive value. It also appears to embody an inconsistent moral virtue, as many non-civilians are no more involved in a conflict than ordinary civilians.

With the term civilian found wanting, the category preferred instead is that of non-combatant. It not only includes all auxiliary military personnel (both retired and serving) but also everyone in the military workforce that are not actively engaged in combat. Additionally, as the term makes a distinction between those who are engaged in combat (combatants) and all others, it is succinctly able to also incorporate the category of civilian. Many academics, when discussing the victim of terrorism, use

both the categories of civilian and non-combatant (See e.g. Kapitan, 2002; Barber, 2007; Weinberg and Eubank, 2008). However, such a practice, at least from a commonsensical and definitional point of view is fairly unnecessary. The categories of combatant and non-combatant alone should suffice.

To sum up, *jus in bello* calls for discrimination in target selection as it permits the attacking of combatants and at the same time grants immunity from attack to non-combatants. Thus, targeting of non-combatants during a conflict will be a violation of a fundamental condition of just war. This condition of non-combatant immunity is however, far from absolute. The just war tradition has a built-in provision that allows exceptions to this rule and permits targeting of non-combatants in certain extraordinary circumstances. This mechanism is better known as the doctrine of double effect.

Generally, complete and unconditional prohibition against any kind of non-combatant killing is associated with absolute moral theories. Many academics, particularly the ones that endorse the just war tradition, are sceptical of such absolutes, as Coady points out ‘many contemporary moral philosophers, sympathetic to just war thinking, are wary of moral absolutes’ (2004: 58).

Schwenkenbecher, in similar vein, finds absolute prohibitions unconvincing. She believes that ‘no moral theory which does not take consequences of actions into account is convincing’ (2012: 69). She makes a distinction between two types of deontological accounts ‘moral absolutism’ and ‘moderate deontology’. Rejecting absolutism, Schwenkenbecher, makes an argument in favor of moderate deontology and concludes that terrorism against non-combatants (or innocents specifically) can be justified if employed to avert a greater disaster and if it satisfies the standard just war criteria (p. 140).

Schwenkenbecher’s moderate deontological position helpfully demonstrates the intersection between deontological and utilitarian moral positions. In fact, the entire edifice of the just war tradition, in spite of being slightly more skewed in favour of utilitarian theories, represents a compromise of sorts between the two opposing moral extremes. It is this compromise that often tends to pull the just war tradition in opposite directions as scholars seek to evoke different principles that match their respective moral inclinations. Thus, a focus on the cause, outcome, and probability of

success (*jus ad bellum*) pulls it towards the utilitarian model and an emphasis on proportionality and discrimination (*jus in bello*) pulls it towards deontological principles. The pragmatic result of this tug of war is the doctrine of double effect (DDE). DDE mainly acquires its rationalization from two of the fundamental features of *jus ad bellum*, the principles of right (or just) reason to go to war and last resort.<sup>18</sup> The doctrine can be explained by two interrelated senses: intentionality and supreme emergency.

There are essentially three strands of DDE intentionality. First, the actor must have a good and just intention, typically to redress some unjustness or wrongness that has been committed. Second, it must not be a deliberate intention of the actor to target non-combatants and any attack on them must either be accidental or incidental. The third strand of intentionality is tied to the proportionality principle of *jus in bello*, that the harm inflicted must never be disproportionate. And in the event a disproportionate harm is inflicted, it must either be accidental or unintended.

Walzer, instrumental in developing the modern theoretical framework of just war, believes that DDE is defensible if it is a 'product of a double intention' that a certain 'good be achieved' and that 'the foreseeable evil be reduced as far as possible' (2006: 262). Rodin fittingly ties DDE to what he calls 'limited noncombatant immunity principle.' According to this principle, non-combatants are generally immune from any deliberate use of force. They are, however, not immune from unintentional use of force against them in the due course of just war. In other words, force can in principle be used against non-combatants 'if they are not its intended target' (2004: 533).

Supreme emergency, a feature essentially tied to the last resort principle of *jus ad bellum*, was developed formally by Walzer. The notion of supreme emergency is different from intentionality in the sense that it grants justificatory space for deliberate use of force against non-combatants in certain extraordinary circumstances. The intentionality principle holds that an attack against non-combatants must be

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<sup>18</sup> A case can be made that the other two attributes of *jus ad bellum*, legitimate authority and probability of success are also essential for DDE. I, however, find this claim somewhat unconvincing, as the legitimate authority precondition will rule out any action by non-state actors. And probability of success, essentially a utilitarian argument, will raise deontological moral considerations.



unintentional, accidental, or incidental, whereas in supreme emergency, such an attack, though extremely regrettable, could well be deliberate and intentional.

Walzer sets two main criterias: 'danger' and 'imminence', both of which must always apply if a situation is to constitute a supreme emergency (2006: 396). The danger posed 'must be of an unusual and horrifying kind' (p. 397), and it must also be urgent, demanding immediate attention. He provides the example of Nazi threat as constituting supreme emergency, 'Here' Walzer argues, 'was a threat to human values so radical that its imminence would surely constitute supreme emergency' (p. 398). Even though supreme emergency permits targeting of non-combatants, Walzer strongly cautions against excessive use of this provision. He particularly upholds the principle of proportionality and believes that if there is a probability that a just attack may result in casualties 'disproportionate to the value of the target; then the attack must be called off' (p. 267).

The doctrine of double effect, since it grants the minimum justificatory room for targeting non-combatants, is perhaps the most important facet of just war as far as the question of terrorism's morality is concerned. However, before we analyze this issue in further detail, it is important first to discuss the last of the three categories of victim- the innocent.

### ***Innocent***

Innocence is one of the most frequently used phrases in the terrorism discourse to describe terrorism's victims. As opposed to civilian and non-combatant, the term innocent is clearly more prone to subjective interpretations. It is nevertheless unquestionably the most positive of the three categories, as it is clearly very difficult (if not impossible) to justify violence against innocents.

Some academics find the civilian/non-combatant distinction far too deeply embedded in the just war tradition and therefore deem it unsuitable for the complex problem of terrorism. The general objection to just war application is that the standard rules of war typically do not or may not apply to terrorism. Most of such criticism is grounded in the belief that the just war tradition has fundamentally been developed for states and since terrorism is more than often a non-state activity, therefore its logic may not

necessarily apply to terrorism. Goodin is amongst the strongest critics of just war. He rebukes the theories of just war, which he argues have been ‘handed down to us from medieval church fathers’ and erroneously ‘assimilated into international law’ (2006: 6). Goodin suggests that the just war tradition is essentially a framework developed for governing wars and state-on-state violence (p. 14) and criticizes Walzer and all other academics that follow his lead in applying the just war tradition to terrorism (p. 7).

Schwenkenbecher, although not as critical as Goodin, also raises questions over the application of just war tradition to terrorism. She believes that the just war criteria though ‘not ideally suited for assessing terrorism’ is not entirely irrelevant and needs some adjustments and modification ‘in order to be applicable to terrorism’ (2012: 80). She mainly objects to the just war combatant/non-combatant discrimination principle, which she believes cannot easily be transferred to the context of terrorism. Instead she suggests that the term innocent should be preferred (p. 52).

This position of course is fiercely contested, as many scholars often draw on the logic of innocence from within the tradition of just war. Coady, for instance, categorizes terrorism as an attack on innocents and considers his classification as an advantage that encourages a discussion on morality and connects it with the well established tradition of just war (2004: 41). The point being that even though most scholars do not necessarily object to combatant/non-combatant distinction, many still frequently utilize the innocent category, often conveniently attaching it to the civilian and non-combatant category (See e.g. Wilkinson, 2000; Walzer, 2006). The category of innocence, in other words, is not entirely exclusive as Schwenkenbecher assumes and is frequently coupled with other categories, which makes it vital to any discussion on terrorism.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an innocent simply as someone that is ‘Not guilty of a crime or offense’.<sup>19</sup> This definition comprehensively captures the popular understanding of the term innocent. Categorizing the victims of terrorism as innocent would entail that they are not guilty or blameable for any crime or wrongdoing. Primoratz explains in detail the sense in which he believes the victims of terrorism are

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<sup>19</sup> Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/innocent>. Accessed on 11 July 2015.

innocent. He argues that what makes the victims innocent is that they are not attacking or engaged in a war against the terrorists, nor are they responsible in any real sense for the perceived injustice, suffering or deprivation that the terrorist is allegedly fighting against. In other words, 'they have not done anything the terrorist could adduce as a justification of what he does to them' (2004: 17-18). Primoratz believes that what 'captures the distinctive obscenity of much terrorism' is that its victims are innocent even from 'the terrorists own point of view' (p. 19-20).

Schwenkenbecher agrees with Primoratz on the usage of the term innocent as 'relating to persons who are in no plausible sense responsible for the problem the terrorists are fighting against' (2012: 52). However, she goes on to make this distinction more pronounced by explaining the difference between an innocent and non-innocent. She points out that on the innocent account, a non-innocent would simply be a person who is in some way responsible for the terrorist's problem. A non-innocent, particularly the ones that have seriously wronged others can justifiably be attacked (p. 53). However, Schwenkenbecher also believes that this responsibility for wronging others is not straightforward as there are different degrees of responsibilities and some individuals can be more responsible than others (p. 60).

Understandably it is fairly difficult to determine innocence of people. Non-state actors in particular may hold the entire society responsible for their suffering or grievances, especially if such a society is a democratic one. A functioning democratic government<sup>20</sup> is elected by the people and is representative of them. If such a government is responsible for some misconduct, then the blame for such wrongdoing can conveniently be transferred to the people that elected it in the first place. Owing to this logic of deduction, it is hard not to be sceptical of the innocent category.

Held, among many others, has maintained a firm opposition to the use of the innocent label. She particularly challenges the widely prevalent practice of treating all civilians as inherently innocent and forcefully asserts that 'many civilians, the so-called 'innocents', may have demanded of their governments the very policies that opponents are resisting, sometimes using terrorism to do so' (2004: 66). Held believes

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<sup>20</sup> Referring to a liberal democracy (or a free society) according to the Freedom House Index. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2012/methodology#.VaOHjYuztW0>. Accessed on 13 July 2015.

that in light of these problems the only class of people that can rightly be categorized as innocent are small children, ‘but beyond this, there is little moral clarity’ (Ibid). Schwenkenbecher further adds people with poor health and mental problems (alongside small children) to the category of people who can properly be categorized as innocent (2012: 61).

Given this predicament it is not surprising that the category of innocent is so heatedly contested. A general consensus on innocence past the category of small children and people with mental health problems will always be extremely hard to achieve. As no serious analyst can reasonably contest the innocence of small children and people with mental health problems, owing to their complete inability to either comprehend or influence the events around them.<sup>21</sup> Whereas, on the other hand, liability for a certain wrongdoing can always be leveled against civilians and non-combatants (or ordinary people generally) that may indirectly be held responsible for it.

As discussed earlier, the just war tradition has a built in provision, the doctrine of double effect, which permits violation of the immunity principle through targeting of civilians and non-combatants under certain conditions. Now the question is: can the same provision be extended to innocents as well? As pointed out earlier, many view the innocent category within the framework of just war and therefore subject it to the same rules of double effect. Valls utilizes such a framework and believes that the killing of innocents is permissible in certain circumstances ‘for innocents may be killed in a just war’ and ‘the basis for this position is the principle of double effect’ (2000: 77).

Even if the category of innocence is to be viewed outside of the strict context of just war, attaining unconditional immunity for innocents will be a tall order for three main reasons. First, the disagreement over who properly qualifies as an innocent has become somewhat of a permanent obstacle. Claiming absolute immunity for a decidedly contested category will always be highly improbable. Second, the degrees of responsibility accorded to people would entail that seemingly innocent people may indirectly be liable for a certain wrongdoing and therefore deserving of some form of

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<sup>21</sup> This is not to suggest that there are no other innocents beyond small children and people with mental health problems but merely to point out that these are the two categories that cannot reasonably be contested.

retaliation or punishment. Lastly, the term innocent is often attached to the civilian and non-combatant category, either under the assumption that the latter two are inherently innocent or simply to emphasize that they should be seen as such. This would mean that the logic of double effect itself could be easily extended or transferred to the innocent category.

The category of innocent then is not very practical and helpful in any meaningful or constructive way. The only two groups that are universally deemed innocent in any real sense of the term- small children and people with mental health problems- are hardly representative of any society. And as long as terrorism does not target these two groups specifically, the assertion that terrorism targets innocents will always be intensely contested.

This of course does not mean that there are no innocents or that terrorism never targets innocents. There can clearly be individuals in any society that are completely not guilty or responsible in any real sense for some alleged wrongdoing the terrorist actors are fighting against. Such individuals can certainly be categorized as innocents. The relationship between innocence, guilt, and responsibility however is a complex matter and will be discussed at length in the last section of this chapter.

This section has analyzed the three main categories of victim: civilian, non-combatant, and innocent. The most commonly used category of civilian is problematic and not a very helpful distinguishing criteria. The practice of using both the categories of civilian and non-combatant is unnecessary, as the latter, on its own, adequately accounts for both. The category of innocent, when treated in isolation, is possibly the least helpful (though it too can be incorporated in the non-combatant category). Lastly, the provision of civilian, non-combatant, innocent immunity is far from absolute as condition for attacking them is provided for by the doctrine of double effect.

The discussion of these three categories of victim so far has been somewhat descriptive. This has consciously been done so as to provide a careful explanatory account of the three categories. We can now progress to a more analytical examination of our problem starting first with an analysis of two very important variables: deliberate and indiscriminate.

## **The Variables: Deliberate and Indiscriminate**

In spite of contradictory and conflicting positions regarding terrorism, almost everyone will generally agree that terrorism, if anything, is essentially bad. Even scholars adhering to the moral position (that seek to identify conditions under which terrorism can be justified) also maintain that terrorism is certainly bad, though they will often quickly go on to add that it is perhaps just as bad, if not less, than other forms of violence (See e.g. Held, 2004).

The reason why terrorism is bad is because it involves some form of violence, or at least its threat, a point hardly anyone will contest. And violence is primarily bad because it usually involves a threat of harm or injury. However, if something is bad, it does not necessarily mean that it is also unjustified. If this was the case, then not only wars and all other forms of violence will be unjustified but also a range of ordinary human activities that we normally consider bad such as lying, gossiping, spying etc. Consider for example this typical hypothetical example: If a person is under a threat of death and the only possible way for him to save his life is through some form of violent retaliation that seriously harms or kills his attacker, then such an act although probably bad (as it involves violence and harm), but given the circumstances, will certainly be considered justified.

For violence to be considered unjust it must both be bad and wrong.<sup>22</sup> Where the word bad can be applied to any and all (including natural) occurrences, the expression wrong is reserved solely for human activities that we generally disapprove of. However, just because something is wrong does not mean that it cannot be justified. Therefore even when violence is wrong, there can still be ground for its justification (the doctrine of double effect discussed in the previous section provides just such a ground), although all such justification will usually be contested. There are of course some forms of violence, particularly the ones that are aimed at systematic elimination of an entire community such as genocide or ethnocide, that are unequivocally wrong and beyond the pale of any justification. Yet, justification for most other forms of violence, political violence in particular, will always be a matter of controversy. Terrorism happens to be one such activity.

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<sup>22</sup> As something that is wrong must also be bad, the word wrong alone should therefore suffice.

The question we must ask now is what is it that makes terrorism specifically wrong and consequently unjustified. This question is at the heart of the moral problem and the answer to it is far from straightforward. Some point out that terrorism is wrong because it generates fear (See e.g. Garrison, 2004; Goodin, 2006; Kaplan, 2009), while others insist that it is because terrorism is an unsanctioned and illegitimate form of violence (See e.g. McPherson, 2007). In spite of these different assertions, the one reason that dwarfs all others concerns the victim of terrorism.

Arguably, there have been some serious attempts, especially with the rise of critical studies, to displace the centrality of victim. However, whether there are attempts to endorse the victim category or to redress it is not the point. The crucial factor is that all such attempts have significantly elevated the victim category and placed it at the forefront of the moral debate of the terrorism problem.

Now if targeting of innocents, civilians or non-combatants is what makes terrorism wrong, unjustified, and consequently immoral then by this logic other forms of violence must also be unjustified and immoral- since they all, in one way or another, threaten to harm ordinary people- be it innocents, civilians or non-combatants (See e.g. English, 2009; Jackson, 2010). However, as we know, this is not always the case. Most other forms of violence generally do not struggle with justification the way terrorism does, even when they target the same victims. To address this somewhat blatant contradiction, the seemingly similar victims of terrorism and other forms of violence are further distinguished by two key variables: deliberate and indiscriminate. I shall now discuss these two in greater detail before moving on to the main discussion.

### ***Deliberate***

In the context of terrorism, there are mainly three different senses of the deliberate characteristic- generation of fear, rational decision, and target selection. From a moral standpoint, deliberate selection of a certain target is perhaps the most important of these senses. The general idea is that terrorism intentionally chooses to target a certain group of people that otherwise enjoy immunity from any kind of violence or harm. In comparison, other forms of violence generally do not target groups that have

immunity and any harm to such groups is either purely unintended or simply unavoidable. A form of violence that deliberately target people with immunity is believed to be inherently wrong, unjustified, and immoral.

The element of deliberate targeting enjoys significant academic patronage, as many consider it be an indispensable characteristic that sets terrorism apart. As Richardson forcefully asserts that the 'most important defining characteristic of terrorism is the deliberate targeting of civilians. This is what sets terrorism apart from other forms of political violence.' She further notes that striking at civilians or non-combatants is not 'an unintended side effect' but in fact part of a 'deliberate strategy' of terrorism (2006: 22). Carr also powerfully states that terrorism is essentially a form of warfare that is 'deliberately waged against civilians' (2007: 48).

Owing to this importance, many insist that the deliberate element should be made a matter of definition. Benjamin Barber, for instance, prefers a definition that 'identifies terrorist acts with the intentional targeting of civilian non-combatants' (2007: 55). Similarly, Ganor also defines terrorism as the 'intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians...' (2002: 292). Coady particularly makes a strong case for including intentionality. He argues that if intentionality were to be removed from a definition of terrorism, then deaths or injuries that happen accidentally during ordinary political rallies or activities would also qualify as terrorism. In his own words, 'It should at least be made clear that the political act intentionally produced the death or threat of death to non-combatants, otherwise loud applause at a political rally which distracted a passing (civilian) motorist causing him to crash into a pole and die would count as an act of terrorism' (1985: 51-52).

Despite the fact that deliberate targeting is considered somewhat characteristic of terrorism, there are still some scholars that contest this position. Willem Schinkel, for instance, notes that the aspect of intentionality, which 'is present in many if not all discussions of terrorism', represents a definite problem of 'intrinsic reduction of definitions' (2009: 185). He believes that intentionality is not part of the core of terrorism and to treat it otherwise, as majority of the scholars do, is erroneous and conceptually unhelpful (p. 187).

Criticism of the deliberate element is predominantly found in the moral position. There are two main strands of this criticism. Firstly, adherents of the moral position



believe that the element of deliberate targeting makes terrorism immoral by definition. It is argued that if terrorism is defined as a form of violence that deliberately targets people with immunity then there will be little point discussing whether there can be any ground for its justification. As Scott Lowe states that by suggesting that terrorism is intentional killing of innocent, we inadvertently build immorality into the definition of terrorism (2006: 253). Secondly, it is also believed that the aspect of intentionality is not unique to terrorism as non-combatants are routinely targeted deliberately in other forms of violence as well (English, 2009). Intentionality, it is argued, should therefore not be seen as a distinguishing feature of terrorism.

On the other hand, adherents of the amoral position almost unequivocally advocate that deliberate targeting of non-combatants is characteristic of terrorism. However, given that the just war tradition (by means of DDE) has a provision for intentional targeting, they must for that reason demonstrate that killing of non-combatants in other so-called legitimate or justified forms of violence is somehow different from terrorism. In this vein, their main contention is that since non-combatant casualties in wars and violence is somewhat unavoidable, therefore there must exist some kind of justificatory space that permits targeting of non-combatants. This justification usually comes in two ways: accidental (which includes negligence and recklessness), and incidental (or foreseen).

The intentionality strand of the double effect doctrine readily provides the necessary justificatory ground for any accidental targeting. According to the logic of accidental targeting, any non-combatant casualties are unanticipated, unexpected and purely accidental. Deaths or injuries to non-combatants thereof, are treated as unforeseen routine accidents that may as a rule come to pass in the due course of any event. Sometimes, however, such accidents could be the result of some negligent or reckless behaviour that could have otherwise been avoided. The accidental provision, though over-all critical of negligence and recklessness, still grants them both the same justificatory space as purely accidental cases.

There are some scholars that are critical of granting such justification, especially to accidents that are a result of negligence and recklessness. David Rodin, for instance, casts doubt over the traditional moral theories that treat accidental casualties in the due course of just wars as regrettable but yet permissible (2004: 762). Instead he

proposes that any ‘deliberate, negligent, or reckless use of force against non-combatants’ should be treated as terrorism (p. 755). This, Rodin argues, will necessitate reexamining of an essential feature of the moral theories, principally the doctrine of double effect, that has long permitted such atrocities (p. 762). Such a proposition, however, does not fare well with many others as it is considered overly idealistic and too far removed from reality. As Holmes points out that any accidental killing during war should not raise concerns over the morality of war itself, because ‘that would no more show that war is immoral than accidental auto deaths would show that highway construction is immoral’ (1989: 190).<sup>23</sup>

In incidental targeting, on the other hand, non-combatant casualties are foreseen in the sense that they are expected and anticipated. The general idea is that in the due course of any just war, some form of harm to non-combatants is simply unavoidable, and in some cases it may even be necessary for accomplishing certain crucial objectives. Therefore, since any kind of war is clearly not possible without some kind of harm to non-combatants, it is argued that instead of prohibiting non-combatant harming altogether, provision for it must form part of the rules and regulations of any violent engagement. As Coady observes, ‘it seems that modern war (and perhaps any war) cannot be conducted unless there is room for some incidental harming of the innocent’ (2004: 57). The rules of such violent engagement and subsequent justification of incidental harming is provided by the supreme emergency strand of the double effect doctrine.

Thus, those who purposely associate deliberate and intentional targeting of non-combatants with terrorism choose not to use the same terms for other forms of violence, favoring instead words like accidental and incidental. Understandably there is clear difference between deliberate and accidental targeting and the two should not be treated analogous. Parallels between them, however, can still be drawn if accidents are a result of negligence and recklessness. On the other hand, the line between deliberate and incidental targeting is a fairly thin one, owing largely to the foreseen and anticipatory nature of the latter. It is this thin line that is subject to intense scrutiny as moral comparisons between the two are frequently drawn. There are three important reasons for such parallel comparisons.

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<sup>23</sup> Holmes, however, does not have similar reservations for incidental or foreseen harming.

First, even though incidental targeting is accompanied with claims of last resort, no other alternative, and respect for proportionality (the hallmarks of supreme emergency), it is still in the end a premeditated choice that consciously targets non-combatants. In this respect, it is not very different from what the word deliberate broadly entails.

Second, feelings of regret and remorse that an assailant of incidental targeting supposedly feels are unimportant, irrelevant and largely fail to distinguish between deliberate and incidental targeting. Feelings are inherently fairly subjective and practitioners of both deliberate and incidental targeting can share the same emotions. And even if they do not, accurately determining their respective feelings is clearly out of the question.

Lastly, treating incidental targeting differently violates the rationality principle of consistency, a point that has eloquently been explained by Holmes. Even though he applies this principle to wars, his logic can easily be extended to terrorism as well. Holmes believes that prohibition against killing can best be ‘understood in ways that yield a plurality of principles’ (1989: 195). Referring to incidental killing as permissible indirect killing of non-combatants, Holmes argues that this approach violates the basic requirement of rationality, ‘namely, that one be consistent’ (p. 196). The consistency here demands that we ‘judge similar cases similarly’ as ‘One cannot perform virtually identical acts and judge them differently unless they differ in morally relevant respects’ (p. 196-197).

Although a morally relevant case could be made in favour of incidental killing (with help from the numerous deontological provisions of the just war tradition), it will still manage very little as far as the intention of the perpetrators are concerned, which despite being considerate and proportionate is still, at base, deliberate. Incidental targeting of non-combatants, therefore, for all intents and purposes is essentially deliberate and in spite of any contrary claims should be seen as such.

### ***Indiscriminate***

The term indiscriminate broadly entails that terrorism has no regard for the identity of its victims. The logic of terrorism’s indiscriminate characteristic can be better

understood if contrasted with the supposedly discriminate nature of other forms of violence.

The term discriminate suggests that there must be a clear distinction between those that can and cannot be attacked. Born out of the tradition of just war, the principle of discrimination categorizes the people permitted for targeting as combatants and the rest as non-combatants. Any actor that claims to be engaged in a just war must therefore respect this principle of discrimination. Most of the other forms of violence and wars in general are expected to respect this distinction. In comparison, terrorism is seen as a form of violence that does not respect the principle of discrimination and violates it deliberately.

The indiscriminate characteristic though essentially tied to the victim is not the only way in which terrorism can be indiscriminate. It also happens to have another often frequently cited complementary sense. This second sense refers to its unpredictable, capricious, and somewhat erratic character, whereby terrorism appears to be random and arbitrary. The random attribute is just as frequently used as indiscriminate- in fact the two are often treated as synonyms. There is of course a small difference between the two as randomness in principle generally refers to only arbitrary and unpredictable behavior, while indiscriminate is a much broader term that not only signifies the class or classlessness of victims targeted but also effectively incorporates the logic of randomness. To use the two terms together, as is commonly done, is therefore inaccurate and somewhat unnecessary as the indiscriminate factor adequately incorporates randomness.

The indiscriminate characteristic enjoys significant support especially among scholars that adhere to the amoral position. Many leading scholars in the field believe it be an indispensable and a defining characteristic of terrorism. Wilkinson, for instance, believes that 'Terrorism is inherently and inevitably a means of struggle involving indiscriminate and arbitrary violence against the innocent' (2000: 218). Walzer similarly alludes to the point that no category of people can claim immunity from terrorism as the terrorists make no distinction and kill just about anyone they please (1977: 203). Terrorism, for Walzer therefore, in a strict sense, is 'the random murder of innocent people' (p. 198).

Among other things, it is perhaps the indiscriminate characteristic in particular that prompts scholars like Wilkinson and Walzer to maintain such a determined opposition to terrorism. The indiscriminate attribute epitomizes the moral dilemma regarding the justification of terrorist violence- because if terrorism is in fact random and arbitrary then it will only be a matter of time before it targets people who otherwise enjoy immunity- be it innocents, civilians, or non-combatants. As Nick Fotion observes that if 'terrorism is aimed randomly at a general population' then it 'will inevitably affect many innocent people' (2004: 48).

It will indeed be very difficult to make a moral case in favour of a form of violence that targets anyone, anywhere and without any constraints. However, the idea of terrorism being indiscriminate has over the years attracted intense scrutiny and criticism especially in critical circles. This criticism can be said to have three distinct strands, which for analytical convenience will be classified here as descriptive, empirical, and pragmatic.

### *Descriptive criticism*

The descriptive criticism of the indiscriminate feature entails that terrorism is not necessarily random and can in fact be discriminate in its choice of targets and suggesting otherwise would violate its ordinary usage and description. Terrorism is primarily considered to be indiscriminate because it supposedly fails to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, innocent and guilty, or civilian and military targets. However, many authors challenge this assumption by pointing to carefully orchestrated attacks on military or government targets that are routinely referred to as acts of terrorism.

Valls draws attention to this point and suggests that those who maintain that terrorism is random or indiscriminate, depart significantly from ordinary usage of the term as there are many 'acts we call terrorist that specifically target military facilities and personnel' (2000: 67). 'The fact is that terrorists' Valls asserts 'or at least those called terrorists by everyone, in fact do discriminate' (p. 76). English also notes that 'random selection of victim has often... been absent from what are clearly terrorist attacks' (2009: 9).

The attacks on military and government targets that are frequently regarded as acts of terrorism go on to raise serious questions over the category of civilian itself. The descriptive criticism therefore, not only challenges the indiscriminate hypothesis, but also raises questions over the category of civilians as the only possible victims or targets of terrorist violence. This has pithily been observed by Held who also acknowledges these obvious ‘descriptive implications’ and points to attacks on non-civilian targets, such as the ones on the USS Cole in Yemen in October 2000 and the Pentagon in September 2001, which are commonly referred to as terrorist attacks (2008: 20).

The terrorist attacks are thus generally not restricted to only civilians, which shows that the purely civilian category can be seriously misleading. Nevertheless, attacking military personnel does not imply that terrorism cannot or would not target non-military targets. In fact, the indiscriminate logic discerned above suggests that terrorism is indiscriminate precisely because it does not distinguish between military and non-military targets and attacks both at random. In light of this observation, the descriptive criticism appears fairly inaccurate and somewhat wrong footed. However, to fully appreciate the logic of descriptive criticism, we must briefly analyze one final sense of the indiscriminate characteristic.

The word indiscriminate by virtue of its nature tends to suggest that terrorism is senseless and pointless violence. This challenges not only any underlying logic of terrorism but also the rationality of the actors that practice it. The truth of the matter is that terrorism is widely believed to be purposive violence with an underlying logic (See e.g. Crenshaw, 1981; Enders and Sandler, 1993). And the terrorists or the actors that practice terrorism are largely believed to be perfectly normal, rational, and sane (See e.g. Pape, 2006; Taylor and Horgan, 2006). As Wardlaw pithily observes, ‘Terrorism is not mindless. It is a deliberate mean to an end’ (1989: 17). Since terrorism often fails to achieve its long-term goals, some utilitarians understandably may question the efficacy and usefulness of terrorist violence. They will still however as a rule not question the rationality of the actor.<sup>24</sup>

In view of the fact that terrorism is widely regarded as a rational activity, it is not surprising that many commentators in the field are sceptical of what the word

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<sup>24</sup> For a detailed discussion on rationality and utility of terrorism, see chapter 4.

indiscriminate entails and are mindful of its descriptive implications. Many scholars feel the need to categorically point to terrorist targeting of military personnel to show that terrorists can be discriminate in their selection of victims.

Coady's position on the matter is clearly demonstrative of this practice. He emphasizes that the adjective indiscriminate is ambiguous as 'it may mean something like random or irrational' and since he believes that terrorists always select their victims carefully, he declines to make it a matter of definition (2004: 7). At the same time, he also acknowledges that there is a sense in which terrorist violence can be indiscriminate, 'namely, the sense in which it fails to discriminate between combatant and non-combatant targets' (1985: 55). Primoratz, who utilizes the category of innocent to classify the victims of terrorism, also argues that terrorism is not indiscriminate in the blind and pointless sense but 'in the sense that it fails to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent' (2004: 17). Because of this double-edged nature of the indiscriminate feature, both Coady and Primoratz, among many others, refuse to make it a matter of definition.

Given the predicament, the descriptive criticism of the indiscriminate feature is reasonably justified. More than anything else perhaps, it represents a strong opposition to the view that terrorism is blind, senseless and irrational. However, irrespective of how reasonable this opposition may seem, it still falls fairly short of comprehensively challenging the indiscriminate characteristic. For a more critical appraisal, therefore, we need to turn to the other two strands of the criticism.

### *Empirical criticism*

The empirical strand of the criticism regards the indiscriminate characteristic as an incongruous theoretical supposition that is largely inconsistent with tangible empirical facts on ground. Like the descriptive criticism, it upholds the rational, strategic, and logical dimension of terrorist violence, but goes one step further in dislodging the abstract assumptions by subjecting the indiscriminate hypothesis to rigorous empirical tests.

The work of Lisa McCartan et al. in this regard is particularly noteworthy. Using quantitative data sets from the Chechen conflict, they discern the logic of terrorist

choice of targets. They argue that the ‘terrorist acts are not indiscriminate or random but rather demonstrate an underlying logic’ and the choice of their targets should be seen as strategic or logical (2008: 60). Their findings reveal that civilians were primarily targeted in Russia and non-civilian or military personnel were most likely to be targeted in Chechnya (p. 72). This led them to conclude that the choice of targets reflects the rational decision of the Chechen rebels to maintain public support at home while causing serious harm in Russia. The actions of the Chechen rebels therefore followed a clear logical pattern and could not be regarded as indiscriminate (p. 73).

The work of Daphna Nisim et al. provides an even more nuanced criticism of the indiscriminate feature. They put to test the ‘randomness hypothesis’, which is described as an ‘indiscriminate act of violence in which targeted victims are not preselected’ (2006: 468). Utilizing the ‘lifestyle-exposure theory’ from criminal victimization studies, they explore the extent to which victims of terrorism are targeted at random (p. 486). The lifestyle-exposure theory advances the argument that an ‘individual’s social status determines his/her lifestyle or routine activities and these in turn determine his/her level of vulnerability’ (p. 487). The findings of their research reject the randomness thesis as they conclude that victimization from terrorism is not random or arbitrary, but in fact dependent upon certain lifestyle indicators such as income, age, and other activities (p. 496).

The empirical criticism, though helpful in many ways has some obvious shortcomings. Firstly, in the absence of an agreed definition of terrorism, different data sets end up utilizing different definitions. This means that they could produce dissimilar results, making it difficult to compare and contrast findings across different quantitative researches. Secondly, given that non-state terrorists are often weak relative to their adversaries, the choice of their target could be a matter of convenience than preference. Since empirical criticism is largely data driven, it could therefore easily be skewed in favor of targets that only reflect terrorist’s choice of convenience and not their actual preference. Lastly, although empirical criticism effectively challenges the random and irrational facets of terrorist violence, it does not adequately explain the reason why terrorism targets certain groups in the first place, making it difficult to challenge the overall edifice of the indiscriminate characteristic.



### *Pragmatic criticism*

The pragmatic strand perhaps provides the most balanced and well-rounded criticism. Even though it opposes strict adherence, pragmatic criticism does not reject the indiscriminate characteristic out of hand. Unlike focusing solely on combatant targeting which descriptive criticism does, it not only provides a more complete and coherent account of terrorist target selection but also explains the sense in which terrorism carries the appearance of being indiscriminate.

The pragmatic criticism challenges the indiscriminate characteristic primarily on the grounds of collective responsibility- the theoretical roots of which can be found in the Roman tradition of *jus gentium*. According to this tradition, a group can be held responsible for actions committed by its members (Becker, 2006: 13). Hence, terrorists that often seek to redress some grievances may hold an entire group or community collectively responsible, even if they are aware that only a few individuals are directly responsible for the alleged wrongdoing. Under such circumstances, the terrorists may well be within their rights, as far as discrimination in target selection is concerned, when they attack any or all segments of a certain society.

Jeff Goodwin takes on the task of explaining the seemingly indiscriminate logic of terrorist violence. He believes that in order to explain terrorism properly we must try to understand why they choose to target civilians and non-combatants specifically (2006: 2028). He puts forward his ‘theory of categorical terrorism’ and suggests that the word ‘indiscriminate’ should be substituted with ‘categorical’. According to his theory, terrorism is always directed against some people that belong to a specific nationality, ethnicity or religious group. In this sense, terrorism is in fact very discriminate, as it is ‘directed against specific categories of people and not others. ‘For this reason’, Goodwin argues that ‘categorical terrorism is a more accurate label than indiscriminate terrorism’ (p. 2031). Goodwin believes that the terrorist groups target in this fashion because they hold both civilians and non-combatants complicit in some manner. He therefore classifies these people as ‘complicitous civilians’, and argues that terrorist violence against them should not be treated as random or indiscriminate (p. 2037).

In similar vein, Schwenkenbecher argues that the issue of collective responsibility is very crucial to understanding the moral justification of terrorist target selection. She

argues that ‘individuals can be held responsible for an injustice brought about by a collective or group of which they are a member’ (p. 59). Schwenkenbecher extends this collective logic to not only the direct members of a guilty group but also to all others who could have averted this injustice ‘but failed to prevent by either not acting out of ignorance or by consciously deciding not to act’ (Ibid).

This notion of collective responsibility renders the combatant/non-combatant, civilian/military and the innocent/guilty distinction somewhat redundant as the terrorists may hold everyone in a society responsible for their perceived grievances. Since practically just about anyone in the society, in one way or another, can be held responsible for some wrongdoing, their targeting therefore should not be treated as random or indiscriminate.

The three strands of criticism discussed above provide not just an assessment of the indiscriminate feature, but also represent wider attempts to challenge the immorality of terrorism. If we accept that the actors that practice terrorism are normal and rational (which scholars on both end of the moral spectrum do) then it is somewhat safe to conclude that terrorism can never be indiscriminate in any real sense of the term. It may carry the appearance of being indiscriminate, but the targets selected should be seen as symbolic rather than random or indiscriminate.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a symbol as ‘A mark or character used as a conventional representation of an object’.<sup>25</sup> In line with the dictionary definition, treating terrorist targets symbolic would mean that they are representative or mark of an object, a specific and not random or accidental target. Treating a terrorist act as symbolic therefore does not denounce the actor or the act as irrational or senseless. A symbolic characterization of the object of terror as opposed to indiscriminate not only invites far less criticism but also better accounts for the seemingly random appearance of terroristic violence.

As the targets are intended to be symbolic, therefore the terrorists would select those individuals that will have the greatest resonance with their target audience. Since majority of their target audience is ordinary people, or non-combatants in other words, therefore targeting them should at least in principle also achieve the greatest impact.

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<sup>25</sup> Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/symbol>. Accessed on 6/6/2015.

In this regard, terrorism is in fact very selective even though it carries the appearance of being indiscriminate. This is why Lasswell suggests that terrorism is most effective when it is 'indiscriminate in appearance but highly selective in fact' (1978: 262).

In the end, it is also important to remember that even if the indiscriminate characteristic was important to defining terrorism (which as this discussion has shown that it is not), it is still not an analytically or conceptually helpful distinction. For how can we study something that is unpredictable, unreasonable, arbitrary, and senseless in any constructive and meaningful way? Terrorism, as an object of study, would therefore fare much better if it were not treated or categorized as indiscriminate.

Before we move on to our final discussion, it is important to answer the two important questions regarding who the victim of terrorism is and what makes terrorism immoral. It has been explained in detail why the category of non-combatant best categorizes the victim of terrorism. The non-combatant category not only adequately incorporates the two other widely used categories of civilians and innocents but also shows that terrorism by default cannot be used against combatants.

Although some may suggest that terrorism can be committed against combatants, it must be pointed out that most of the examples given in such vein are of military personnel who are not actively engaged in combat, be it the 1983 bombing of U.S. and French barracks or the attack on the USS Cole off the coast of Yemen in 2000. Being a combatant does not automatically translate into military personnel, as is often assumed, but in fact describes people who are actively engaged in some belligerent activity. It will be hard to even imagine terrorism against combatants that are otherwise actively engaged in fighting. Furthermore, suggesting that terrorism also targets combatants would only entail that terrorism is being used as a tool of political rhetoric to denounce one's opponents in some ongoing conflict.

Secondly, in light of the above discussion, there also need not be any confusion over what potentially makes terrorism immoral. The elements of intentionality and indiscriminate violence are not exclusive to terrorism (nor for that matter is generation of fear) and because of that they cannot in any reasonable manner explain why terrorism is deemed immoral. Moreover, these elements are judged to be morally problematic precisely because they are intrinsically tied to the victim of terrorism. It is hard to imagine that anyone will have even the slightest of qualms (morally speaking)

with these variables if the victim were to be removed. It is somewhat safe to conclude therefore that what makes terrorism immoral is its victim (or simply the category of non-combatants).

The most convincing criticism of the non-combatant category is that it is not exclusive to terrorism and if it is what makes terrorism immoral, then by that standard all forms of violence should be deemed immoral (See e.g. Goodin, 2006). Understandably, non-combatants are routinely targeted in other forms of violence as well, be it insurgencies, guerilla warfare, or wars in general. This, however, does not mean that we should do away with the category of non-combatant altogether. What we must not forget is that there is significant overlap between terrorism and other forms of violence as terrorism can be employed either as a tactic or a strategy in their midst (this issue has been discussed at length in chapter 5).

## **Discussion**

Support for a certain category of victim in combination with certain variables should, at least in principle, also adhere to an analogous moral position. However, this curiously is not always the case. Mostly we find scholars that identify similar categories of victims and intervening variables and yet somehow end up endorsing different and even opposing moral positions. Emphasizing similar attributes of terrorism and yet arriving at completely different conclusions is particularly demonstrative of the irregularities and inconsistencies that plague the terrorism discourse. It has been pointed out in this chapter that among all other characteristics of terrorism the one that primarily raises the moral question is the category of victim and its closely associated variables (deliberate and indiscriminate).

Associating a certain class of victims such as innocents, civilians, or non-combatants purposely with terrorism tend to make it appear immoral and unjustified. Yet in spite of this, it is not uncommon to find academics that identify the victims as such and yet curiously enough, still consider their conceptualization to be objective and morally neutral. Kapitan, for instance, defines terrorism as a threat directed against innocents, civilians, or non-combatants and yet argues that his 'conception implies nothing directly about whether an act of terrorism can be justified or not' (2002: 173).

Primoratz also conceptualizes terrorism as deliberate violence employed against innocent people and yet believes his definition is morally neutral as it ‘does not rule out its justification under certain circumstances’ (2004: 24). Similarly, Coady also defines terrorism as an activity directed against non-combatants and at the same time believes that his definition ‘avoids the pitfall of making terrorism immoral by definition’ (2004: 8).

The category of victim, as we know, is not exclusive to terrorism, as civilians, innocents, and non-combatants are routinely targeted in other forms of violence as well. Those making a moral case against terrorism, therefore, additionally point to two key variables (deliberate and indiscriminate) that supposedly make terrorism not only distinct but also explain why it is morally repugnant. Interestingly however, many scholars on the other end of the moral spectrum (those making a moral argument for the justification of terrorist violence) more than often also tend to associate the same variables with terrorism under the impression that it is not these variables that make terrorism morally questionable.

Hence, it is fairly common to find scholars that incorporate either the deliberate or the indiscriminate feature (or both) in their respective understanding of terrorism and at the same time also assert that their conceptualization is morally neutral. For example, McPherson, who is extremely critical of the amoral position, defines terrorism as a force deliberately employed against non-combatants (2007: 525). In a similar vein, Shanahan, who otherwise challenges the notion that terrorism by definition is morally wrong, conceptualizes it as ‘strategically indiscriminate’ (2010: 178). This is not to suggest that all such positions are necessarily wrong but merely to draw attention to the extraordinary level of confusion and uncertainty not to mention the obvious contradiction over what it is that makes terrorism immoral.

In light of this confusion, should we also conclude as English (2009) does- that given the heterogeneity of terrorist violence all these categories and distinctions are essentially problematic and to an extent also unhelpful? This chapter has argued that irrespective of individual moral proclivity, both the deliberate and intentional elements are largely unsatisfactory and inadequate criteria for distinguishing terrorism. The fact that their usage is contradictory or confusing should therefore be beside the point.

Terrorism is certainly deliberate in the sense that it is not irrational, a point hardly anyone will contest. Beyond this, however, it is perhaps no more deliberate than any other form of violence, be it in regard to generation of fear or target selection. It has been pointed out earlier that those who espouse to the amoral position and use the term 'deliberate' solely for terrorism, prefer instead to use terms like accidental or incidental for other forms of violence. An accidental harm, as long as it is not due to negligence or recklessness, is fundamentally different from deliberate harming. Incidental harm, on the other hand, owing to its premeditated and foreseen nature is essentially the same as deliberate harm. To treat them differently, as is often done, will not change what the terms broadly designate and stand for.

Although the term accidental is hardly ever used for terrorist violence, it is worth remembering that there are instances when terrorism can also be accidental. The 1993 IRA bombing of the Shankill Road is one such example. The IRA intended to assassinate a UDA leader but a premature explosion of the bomb resulted in the unintended or accidental death of eight non-combatants and one IRA assailant (Silke, 2003). Both the terms accidental and incidental do not denote anything that is fundamentally opposed to terrorism. Terrorism, just like other forms of violence, can be accidental and the word incidental is essentially the same as deliberate. Even though some scholars may object to this proposition, they will struggle hard to object to the fact that the idea of terrorism being accidental or incidental cannot easily be ruled out by definition.

On the other hand, there is also no denying that there is a sense in which terrorism has the appearance of being indiscriminate. However, this has little to do with its failure to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants or guilty and innocent or military and civilian targets. It is indeed true that one of the reasons why terrorism seems indiscriminate is because of its unpredictability in terms of when and where it may strike and which specific individuals it will target. In this sense, however, it is again not very different from other forms of violence as unpredictability in terms of when, where, and who, is never explicitly specified. Unpredictability forms part of surprise, secrecy, and trickery, which are essential component of the wars and violence generally. Hence, since all forms of violence share the element of unpredictability, it seems highly unfair that only terrorism should be categorized as indiscriminate.

The sense in which terrorism seems or appears indiscriminate has more to do with our failure to acknowledge how the terrorists hold their target society responsible for a certain wrongdoing. Our failure to recognize that civilians, non-combatants, and even innocents can be held accountable for some presumed wrongdoing, contributes to the mistaken assumption that terrorism is indiscriminate.

There will always be individuals in any targeted society that neither play any part in an alleged wrongdoing nor are aware of it, but will still be targeted. What we often forget though is that they are still a part of the larger society that is accused of a wrongdoing, and according to the logic of collective responsibility, the terrorist actors can hold them accountable as well. Even if the terrorists are aware of their complete non-involvement, they could still be targeted for their ignorance of a wrongdoing that is being committed in their name or simply to draw their attention to the problem. Moreover, as these targeted people belong to the accused society, targeting anyone (as long as they are deemed representative of the target society), irrespective of their level of involvement, will send a message to all other members of the community, which is the quintessence of terrorist violence.

Does this mean that there are no innocents involved in terrorist violence? Does terrorism always target individuals that are always, in one or another responsible for an alleged wrongdoing? Can terrorism therefore not be immoral?

The basic principles of morality dictate that no harm should come to pass to anyone that is innocent of any wrongdoing. This is why a moral alarm is raised when the categories of civilian and non-combatant (generally regarded as innocent of any wrongdoing) are targeted. However, this chapter has shown that beyond the class of small children and people with mental health problems, the category of innocence is strewn with disagreement. Liability or responsibility for some alleged wrongdoing can generally be levelled against civilians or non-combatants either directly or indirectly.

A direct responsibility entails that someone or some group is individually or personally held responsible for an alleged wrongdoing. An indirect responsibility, on the other hand, can be conferred in two different ways. It could be extended to people that are believed to be related in some way to the individuals directly responsible and therefore themselves circuitously contributing towards the wrongdoing, e.g. people

belonging to the same ethnic group, sect, or nationality. Responsibility can also be extended to people or groups who are in a position to influence the behaviour of the directly responsible but are either ambivalent or simply unaware of the terrorist grievances.

If the logic of collective responsibility dictates that the terrorists can deprive people of their innocence by extending responsibility (directly or indirectly) for some wrongdoing then why do so many people, including a great number of academics, associate terrorism with targeting of innocents? Does the doctrine of collective responsibility entail that terrorism by default can never target innocents? The issue of responsibility and how it can be extended is at the heart of the moral debate. It is, however, a complex matter that goes well beyond the simple logic of direct/indirect and collective responsibility so far discussed in this chapter. In order to fully appreciate the complex task of assigning responsibilities, the debate must therefore be analyzed outside the strict context of terrorism and in the broader field of moral philosophy.

The idea of awarding or extending responsibility, intrinsically tied to the broader issue of morality, is far from straightforward, as there are degrees of responsibility and accountability. Some individuals may be more directly associated with a certain injustice or wrongdoing and therefore more responsible than others who are only remotely connected or vaguely aware of it. The respective level of responsibility in principle should also determine the guilt and punishment accorded to the concerned parties.

The work of Holmes in this vein is particularly noteworthy as he discusses the degrees of 'relations of conduct to wrongdoing'. 'Guilt', Holmes argues, 'is a strong notion, and we usually reserve it for the actual performance of serious acts of wrongdoing. Responsibility or culpability we reserve for those whose conduct is farther removed from wrongdoing but not so far removed as to render them innocent' (1989: 185). Holmes makes this distinction to mainly differentiate between innocence and non-innocence in relation to the conduct of a wrongdoing and to stress that even though being responsible in some manner is not as bad as being guilty, it still entails that one is not innocent. Where an innocent is someone that is neither guilty nor responsible



for some wrongdoing, the expression non-innocent ‘encompasses both guilt and responsibility’ (Ibid).

Holmes’s distinction thus establishes a firm relationship between responsibility and non-innocence. According to which, an individual will be considered non-innocent even if he is faintly responsible for a wrongdoing. This proposition is also consistent with the overall logic of collective responsibility. In the context of terrorism, this would mean that the victims would always be non-innocent as long as they are responsible, no matter how remotely, for an alleged wrongdoing. I will, however, argue that the relationship between responsibility and non-innocence is not as one-dimensional and definitive as Holmes envisages and those deemed responsible could still qualify for the innocent label. This would, among other things, allow terrorism to target innocents. I shall explain this with the help of a hypothetical example.

Imagine a murder motivated by greed for some financial reward involving four different individuals: one that authorizes the murder, another that physically commits the murder, a third that provides the weapon, and lastly a fourth individual who is aware of the murder but does nothing to stop it. Clearly, they are all responsible, in one way or another, for the murder committed.

The first and the second person, one that orders (authorizer) and the other that physically performs the act of murder (the executor), are directly involved in the decision and conduct of the murder in question. They are, therefore, clearly the most responsible and guilty. The third and the fourth person’s involvement are indirect, with the third person- one that provides the weapon (facilitator)- more responsible than the fourth. The first two individuals made a deliberate decision to commit the murder and the third was used more as an accessory. The punishment that must be accorded to all three, should in principle, correspond to their respective level of involvement. The first two deserve more punishment than the third person, who may have provided the weapon but could not have known what it was going to be used for and is therefore not as directly involved with the murder as the first two.

It is the responsibility of the fourth person that is particularly intriguing and deserves special attention here. The fourth person as opposed to the authorizer, executor, and facilitator, can perhaps best be described as a bystander. If this bystander knew of the murder and decided to do nothing because of some financial reward then he is

culpable and deserves punishment as well (though markedly less than the other three, owing to the indirect nature of his involvement). If, however, he did nothing because of feeling threatened or intimidated and out of fear for his own life (or someone else's life) then he should not get any punishment at all. This still does not mean that he is no longer responsible for the murder. The fact that he knew of the murder and could have prevented it (by reporting it to authorities or taking some action himself), but chose not to, means that he is still responsible. Although what has changed now is that his responsibility is so far removed that it is simply unpunishable.<sup>26</sup>

Responsibility and punishment mostly enjoy a directly proportional relationship, the more the responsibility the greater the punishment and vice versa. In case of our hypothetical example, the first two share the greatest responsibility and therefore deserve the greatest share of punishment as well. The responsibility of the facilitator and the bystander (provided the bystander too was motivated by some financial reward), on the other hand, is far removed, but not so far removed as to render them entirely innocent. They should therefore get punishment as well, although their punishment should be markedly less than the others.

If we accept that the last actor cooperated not out of free will or some financial reward but instead out of fear, then from a moral standpoint, he is innocent of the murder and should not be punished at all. Although most scholars would almost unequivocally agree that under such circumstances the actor should not be punished, some may however find the innocent categorization objectionable on grounds that the murder would not have taken place if the fourth actor had not cooperated. However, this discussion has shown that if the intention of the actor was some financial reward then he is certainly not innocent and must also be punished. On the other hand, if he cooperated because of a credible threat to his own or someone else's life then he must

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to acknowledge here that responsibility has a strong relationship with intention. The murder itself was the intention of the first two actors and not the latter two (even if the third person knew of the murder, it was not his individual intention) and they therefore deserve greater punishment. Establishing intent is perhaps one of the most difficult things and although in the current legal system it is normally established with evidence, knowing the exact intentions of the actors entails unraveling the inner psychological processes of individuals, which is simply not possible. In our example, we will therefore assume that the intentions of the first three actors were motivated by some financial reward. The intentions of the fourth actor will be treated as unclear.

be considered innocent. We must acknowledge that his or someone else's life (that he is trying to save) is no less important than the life of the person about to be murdered.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, however, owing to the fact that his knowledge of the murder could have helped prevent it entails that he nonetheless still shares a responsibility for the murder. It must be pointed out though that this responsibility was not of his choosing and was in fact imposed upon him through perhaps threat or intimidation. In a sense then, where the other three actors share 'voluntary responsibility' (as they acted out of their own choosing and willingly participated in a wrongdoing), the fourth actor was an unwilling participant and the responsibility extended to him must therefore be regarded as involuntary or *imposed responsibility*.

In other words, even though it is entirely possible for an actor to be responsible for a wrongdoing, there can still be conditions under which he can be innocent. Innocence, therefore, cannot simply be ruled out of hand even if an actor shares responsibility for some wrongdoing. It must also be noted that this innocent actor, in spite of being responsible, cannot be punished for the wrongdoing. Responsibility, innocence, and punishment are hence in a very narrow sense somewhat independent of each other. And although the relationship between responsibility and punishment is generally directly proportional, there should be no punishment in the event a responsibility is imposed.

The term non-innocence therefore does not automatically encompass both guilt and responsibility as Holmes suggests, since there exists room for a person to be completely innocent even if he is responsible for a wrongdoing. It will be against our fundamental moral values if someone, upon whom responsibility is imposed, is regarded as non-innocent. Before judging someone to be non-innocent based on some degree of responsibility, it is important therefore to see if the responsibility under question is voluntary or imposed. This is where the idea of imposed responsibility is fundamentally different from the well-known doctrine of collective responsibility.

The main problem with collective responsibility is that it blames more or less everyone in the same way for a wrongdoing and leaves little to no room for

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<sup>27</sup> Assuming that all the concerned individuals are innocent to begin with.

innocence. Even more so, collective responsibility does not take into account the degrees of responsibilities, as its underlying assumption is that everyone, in one way or another is guilty of the wrongdoing.

This broad-brush treatment is precisely the problem with the notion of collective responsibility. It blames everyone equally and fails to account for degrees of responsibility in the society. Its implications as a result are so vague and generic that it has no analytical value and its complete failure to account for innocence even deprives it of its ethical worth. It is not surprising therefore that the logic of collective responsibility, in spite of providing perhaps the most prudent and pragmatic defense in favor of terrorist violence is not very well received.

In any society there will always be some innocents and it is extremely important for ethical, practical, and analytical reasons that their innocence is duly accounted for. Scholars that attempt to grant justificatory ground to terrorism by means of collective responsibility risk depriving ordinary people of their innocence.

The idea that terrorism targets innocents is so deeply entrenched in our conscience that all counter suggestions unsurprisingly have up until now only led to confusion and contradiction. This of course does not mean that we should feel compelled to describe terrorism's victims as essentially innocent, as many scholars do. Terrorism does target innocents, but not only innocents. In any formal conceptualization of terrorism therefore, provision to attack innocents must always be provided and should not be ruled out by definition. As collective responsibility largely fails to provide this provision, we must substitute it with something that does, and the logic of imposed responsibility comfortably fills that gap. Having thus outlined the concept of imposed responsibility, we can now finally move to justification of terrorist violence.

In order to be justified, a punishment must be proportional to the degree of responsibility. Thus, if terrorism were to be regarded as a form of punishment that is conferred upon those believed to be responsible for some perceived wrongdoing or injustice, then by virtue of the logic discerned above, the ones deemed most responsible for the wrongdoing should, at least in principle, also receive the highest punishment as well. On the other hand, the less responsible should get lesser punishment and lastly those upon whom responsibility is imposed should not get any punishment at all. To satisfy moral principles and to be justified, terrorism ideally

must therefore be employed in degrees, just as degrees of punishments are awarded for different crimes in ordinary legal systems.

The problem, however, is that terrorism, wars, and violence in general are not necessarily punishments imposed for a certain wrongdoing, but in a Clausewitzian sense, could simply be regarded as continuation of politics by other means. The reasons and causes of war and violence are clearly beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, what is important is that even if they do not ascribe to the accepted code and degrees of punishment, they are still susceptible to some form of moral norms and principles generally. Moreover, the basic logic of degrees of punishment will always seep in whenever a form of violence is subjected to standard moral ethics. These moral ethics are principally determined by conditions set out in *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* of the just war tradition.

The just war tradition, inherently mindful of the degrees of punishment, sets out conditions of proportionality and discrimination that are ought to be observed in the due course of a just war. These two conditions are ideally set out to make sure that the punishment does not exceed the responsibility and the ones directly responsible get corresponding level of punishment as well. However, owing to the nature of wars and violence generally, observing proportionality and discrimination can be a tall order and that is where the doctrine of double effect comes into play. With its provision for accidental and incidental targeting, it overrides moral principles concerning the degrees of responsibility and permits targeting of people, who otherwise deserve no punishment. Compelled by the nature of war and violence, it places utilitarian considerations over commonly accepted moral values regarding responsibility and punishment. Hence, even if wars (or any form of violence for that matter) fail to uphold the basic moral code of punishment, they can still be justified on utilitarian or consequentialist grounds.

The doctrine of double effect crucially pushes the deontological provisions of proportionality and discrimination in the background as it implicitly allows targeting of innocent people with notions of accidental and incidental targeting and the logic of supreme emergency. It is due to this utilitarian provision, which permits wars and violence to be justified even when innocents are deliberately targeted that many academics question the immorality of terrorism. It will perhaps not be an exaggeration

to suggest that if the double effect provision did not exist, no one could reasonably challenge the immorality of terrorism.

It is also worth mentioning here that the double effect provision for attacking non-combatants or innocents is, in a way, perhaps even morally worse than terrorist attacking. According to the double effect doctrine, the accidental, incidental and supreme emergency strands permit targeting of people that it itself acknowledges as innocent of any wrongdoing. On the other hand, the terrorists, as is commonly believed, generally target individuals it deems responsible for a wrongdoing, even though it is true that this responsibility is mostly imposed and not of the victim's own choosing. The point being that the terrorists at least target those innocents believed to be responsible for a wrongdoing, whereas, the logic of double effect deliberately allows targeting of those believed to be completely innocent and not responsible for any wrongdoing.

This is not to suggest that wars are morally worse than terrorism but merely to point out an important paradox that is usually ignored because of our inability to account for the logic of degrees of responsibilities. Terrorism is certainly wrong and one does not have to be a moral absolutist to figure that out. It is fundamentally wrong because it is a human activity that involves violence and a threat of harm. It is this wrongness that is embodied in the term's pejorative undertone- a characteristic almost universally acknowledged by every scholar. Its justification, on the other hand, is a matter of controversy that is determined not by some objective moral standard but instead by means of the moral continuum discussed earlier in the chapter. The amoral position, at one end of this continuum, deems terrorism to be morally repugnant and inherently unjustified and consciously bolsters its pejorative undertone. This view is forcefully contested by the absolute moral position on the other end of the spectrum that seeks to redress and revise the negative connotation of the term. In between these two are the passive approaches that (based on their respective moral proclivity) tend to lean towards one of the two extremes.

These conflicting and opposing positions, in spite of contrary claims, are in large part due to non-combatants that terrorism distinctly targets. The problem is accentuated with the assertion that terrorism specifically targets innocents. This discussion has shown that terrorism does indeed target innocents, but not specifically nor deliberately

or indiscriminately. Moreover, provision for targeting innocents is also granted in just wars through accidental and incidental targeting, so even if terrorism does target innocents, it still does not make it distinct or lesser of the two evils. The fact that non-combatants are targeted in both wars and terrorism however does not mean that we should not raise any moral qualms whatsoever.

Targeting non-combatants is wrong, be it in wars or terrorism. There can, however, still be justificatory ground for targeting them as long as the non-combatants bear a voluntary responsibility for a wrongdoing, since those bearing such responsibility deserve to be punished according to widely held moral beliefs. On the other hand, targeting of non-combatants will be unjustified if they bear no responsibility or if a responsibility has been imposed on them. In other words, when terrorism targets innocents (bear in mind that those upon whom responsibility has been imposed also qualify as innocents) it must be deemed unjustified. In all other instances, when the victims are not innocent, i.e. when they bear voluntary responsibility for a wrongdoing, there will always be strong ground for justification of terrorism.

This chapter, among other things, has addressed one of the most fundamental challenges faced by theoreticians in the field of terrorism studies regarding the question of whether or not terrorism specifically targets innocents. The question is heatedly contested, given the condemnatory and pejorative nature of the term that gestures towards targeting of innocents, on the one hand, and the logic of collective responsibility that insists that there are no innocents, on the other. It has been shown that terrorism does indeed target people who are innocents, however, being innocent does not mean that one cannot be held distantly responsible for a wrongdoing. In the case of terrorism a responsibility can and will always be frequently extended to people who are not directly responsible and could even be completely unaware of a wrongdoing that is being committed in their name. Such responsibility, in a sense, is therefore imposed on people that can otherwise only be characterized as innocents and the violence or punishment imposed on them will always be unjustified. In other words, in the end it is the innocence of the victims that determines the justification of terrorist violence.

The question over terrorism's morality will persist as long as the double effect doctrine with its provision to attack non-combatants exists. Parallels between wars

and terrorism will continue to be drawn to challenge terrorism's immorality. This dilemma, however, is far from permanent and can be resolved if we acknowledge the heterogeneity of terrorism, as in that it can be utilized as a tactic or a strategy during wars, insurgencies, guerrilla warfare and any other type of political violence, a point that will become clear in the later half of this thesis.



### 3. Actor

Essentially everything about terrorism and what it entails is fundamentally contested except for the unquestionable obvious veracity that it is a social phenomenon and a human activity.<sup>28</sup> Now if terrorism is a social activity, performed by those who are either in power or aspire for it, then clearly it cannot take place in a vacuum; there must also be some social actors responsible for it. Logic would then dictate that those who perform this activity should also incidentally be called terrorists. However, reality is far more complex and such a categorization is not as simple and straightforward as it appears at first glance. Given the lack of agreement on what a terrorist activity constitutes in the first instance and whether or not such an activity should also designate a distinctive class of actors who perform it, identifying the perpetrator of terroristic violence is certainly not an easy undertaking.

In spite of this discouraging premise, there are generally two very broad categories of actors, which all students of terrorism and political violence are familiar with, namely state and non-state (or sub-state) actors. The academics may agree on both or disagree on one but they will normally never disregard the two categories altogether. The reason they can never disregard both categories is because there is no third category and the two sufficiently account for any and all social actors in-between. However, despite being broad, the state and non-state categories are not entirely unhelpful and evince some important facts about terrorism, which are hardly ever fully realized. In particular, since the notions of state and non-state broadly refer to the existing, aspiring or even imagined societal actors in some corresponding social order, they draw attention to perhaps one of its most important and distinguishing characteristic, namely the political nature of terrorist violence.

Owing to the significance of the political characteristic in relation to the discussion at hand and its bearing on terrorism more generally, it is important first to discuss it in greater detail.

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<sup>28</sup> Some postmodern and critical scholars may even contest this assertion.

## **The centrality of politics**

Over the years, many leading scholars in the field of terrorism studies have emphasized the centrality of politics to terrorism. Wilkinson observes that terrorism primarily seeks to ‘influence political behavior in some way’ (1992: 289). Monaghan also notes that ‘An act of terrorism is one that has been carried out for a political purpose... It is the existence of this political motive that differentiates terrorism from ‘normal’ crime’ (2000: 256). Hoffman states that ‘terrorism, in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the term, is fundamentally and inherently political’ (2006: 2). Weinberg and Eubank point out that the political objective is ‘a widely shared element’ of most definitions of terrorism (2008: 187-188).

There are, however, some scholars who disagree about the centrality of politics, although such dissensions are usually fairly uncommon. Scholars that advocate such a viewpoint mainly argue that terrorism need not necessarily be politically motivated and point to a variety of other motivating factors such as ideology, religion, criminal etc. Given the range of diverse motivating factors, any definition or conception of terrorism, it is argued, should not be strictly restricted to only political motivation.

Primoratz, for instance, deliberately makes no reference to motivation in his definition of terrorism so that it ‘covers both political and non-political’ aspects of terrorism (2004: 24). Shanahan likewise argues that terrorism should not be restricted to just the political element and includes ideological, social, religious and military reasons in his definition of terrorism (2010: 177). Various other scholars who follow this line of reasoning typically choose not to make any reference to the intention of the actor and purposely keep their definitions of terrorism broad and inclusive. Kaplan, for example, chooses not to include any of the motivational factors in his ‘functionalist’ definition of terrorism (2009: 188).

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and other religiously inspired non-state actors in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century prompted many scholars to focus on religious beliefs and convictions. As a result, such analyses have frequently been divorced from their underlying political context. Extremist Islamic groups such as Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah have often predominantly been viewed as religious or ideological movements.

Giandomenico Picco, for instance, believes that for certain terrorist groups ideology is of paramount importance. For all such groups, Picco argues, political objectives are important, only insofar as they support or promote the wider ideological goals of the group. He classes the Al-Qaeda organization as one such group and believes that its 'political objectives shift over time which proves by itself that they do not constitute the essence but only the façade of Al-Qaeda' (2006: 14). Similarly, James Piazza also believes that groups like Al-Qaeda are driven primarily by ideology and have little or no practical political considerations (2009: 65).

There are, however, a number of problems associated with approaches that undermine or challenge the absolute centrality of politics to terrorism. Firstly, it must be borne in mind that all such oppositions are fairly uncommon and are not in any way representative of wider academic sentiments. Vast majority of the academic community generally agrees that politics and terrorism are inseparable.

Secondly, all such broad and inclusive approaches that misplace the centrality of politics normally do not challenge the underlying political context but typically only stress that the terrorist motivations tend to be diverse and should therefore not be limited to only political. In doing so, however, such inclusive approaches tend to miss out on the important point that highlighting the political context specifically does not invalidate, challenge, or even undermine the existence of other factors. Moreover, they also fail to realize that with the exception of the political element, all other motivational factors are often at times found wanting. The political factor, in other words, is present even when all other motivating factors are absent.

Thirdly, in any discussion on terrorism, it is important to remember that all alternatively advanced motivations such as social and religion do not stand-alone and are always intertwined with certain political inhibitions. As Coady points out, 'When religion or ideology employs violent means to undermine, reconstitute or maintain political structures for the further transcendent ends of religion or ideology, then that counts as political purposes' (2004: 41).

In a discussion on the importance of religious as opposed to political motivations, English pithily notes that it is 'political, rather than religious, context and convictions which are the key variables involved in explaining terrorism; religion is on occasion important insofar as it relates to this broader and very complex political process'

(2009: 39). English also challenges the assertion that the political objectives of religious extremist groups like Al-Qaeda are insignificant or extraneous and points towards the entwined nature of politics and religion. 'The interwovenness of the religious and political dimensions of terrorism can be seen again in bin Ladenism, which involves the simultaneous desires to expel the US from the Middle East and to construct an Islamic State which would control oil resources in that region' (p. 40).

Lastly, the most compelling of all criticisms concerns the intent of the actors. Arguably establishing intent is one of the most difficult tasks, however unlike the intention to generate terror or target non-combatants, centrality of politics to terrorism does not necessarily translate into political objective of the perpetrators but broadly also gestures towards the visible wider political impact and implications a terrorist act incidentally has.

Whether this impact is in the form of some political backlash or a result of interpreting the actor's intentions as such is beside the point here. What matters essentially is the indispensable political impact that all terroristic violence essentially has. Terrorism is a rational activity and its objective, in one way or another, is always political in nature. With that being said, since it is not possible to determine the exact intent of the actors, what we can reasonably conclude is that there is an unambiguous political dimension to terrorism, whether intended or not. Perhaps, a better way to emphasize the political dimension of terrorism then would be to say that it is political in nature than to suggest that it is a politically motivated form of violence.

Terrorism thus is fundamentally and inherently political, a verity otherwise clearly exhibited by our use of the categories, state and non-state. In other words, the choice of our labels for actors practicing terrorism designates a class of social actors that represent and characterize subsequent political arrangements and dynamics in the society.

Having thus established that terrorism is, at base, political and that a political activity, at any given time, involves either of the two actors (state or non-state) or both, it is important now to analyze these two actors in detail. Since politics is essentially about power, those who have it and those that aspire for it- the two actors, state and non-state, are normally distinguished from each other in terms of their relative power

position in the society. It is this distinction based on power politics that we shall now turn our attention to.

### **Terrorism and relative power positions**

A full explanation of what the term politics entails is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of our discussion the dictionary definition alone should suffice. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines politics as ‘activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government’.<sup>29</sup> This definition gestures towards two different functions performed in relation to government and power- the act of getting to or staying in power and the act of influencing it. These functions subsequently also draw attention to the actors who perform them- those who are in power and those who either aspire for it or want to influence it in some manner. Traditionally, monopoly over power has been associated with the state and any attempts to challenge, influence, or sway this monopoly has been linked to non-state activities. Terrorism, in a sense, can then be committed for two interrelated reasons by two distinct actors.

Scholars have long sought to distinguish between state and non-state usage of terrorism. This distinction is primarily made on the basis of the existing power structures in the society. Before moving on to our analysis, it will be beneficial to look at some of these academic attempts to distinguish between state and non-state terrorism. This will allow us to see how these distinctions play out for the broader understanding of terrorism itself.

Thomas Thornton can be credited with providing one of the earliest of such distinctions. Thornton makes a distinction between what he calls ‘enforcement terror’ and ‘agitational terror’. Enforcement terror describes the activities of the state or the ‘incumbents who wish to suppress a challenge to their authority’ and agitational terror refers to the activities of the ‘insurgents who wish to disrupt the existing order and achieve power’. Thornton believes that the manner in which terror is utilized is dependent on the actor. The state or the ‘incumbent in power’ will utilize terror ‘as an extreme mean of enforcing their authority’. On the other hand, the non-state actors or

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<sup>29</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politics>. Accessed on: 5 November, 2015.

‘insurgents out of power’ will employ terror to provoke ‘certain reactions from the incumbents or an otherwise apathetic population’ (1964: 72).

William May also makes a similar distinction between state and non-state terrorism. ‘Terrorism’, he argues, ‘is of two kinds: the regime of terror and the siege of terror’ (terminologies he borrows from Eugene Walter). May points out that in the regime of terror, terrorism can be seen as an instrument of the established order, while, in the siege of terror, terrorism is used by ‘revolutionary movements that are bent on overthrowing a dominant regime’ (1974: 277). The regime and siege of terror correspond respectively to state and non-state terrorism.

Although both these distinctions seem fairly simple and straightforward, they come with a host of problems. Thornton’s distinction is helpful insofar as it distinguishes between agitational and enforcement terror. However, it is his strict association of these characteristics to distinct actors that is somewhat problematic. His categorization appears to suggest that state actors cannot engage in acts of agitation and non-state actors cannot take part in enforcement terror. This distinction is not entirely convincing, as state actors, especially in the contemporary age (mostly due to the rise in state sponsored terrorism), routinely engage in acts of agitation and the non-state actors often tend to perform actions that will otherwise fall under the rubric of enforcement terror (Schwenkenbecher, 2012).

May’s classification also suffers from similar problems. He identifies regime of terror with the state and siege of terror with non-state actors. The regime category denotes authority and control over power and therefore to some extent captures the essence of state actors. However, the term ‘regime of terror’ tends to designate violence committed domestically or within a state’s area of jurisdiction and therefore largely fails to account for state sponsored terrorism. May’s ‘siege of terror’ is perhaps even more problematic. In common parlance, the term ‘siege’ can be used to describe actions of both state and non-state actors. Attribution of siege of terror to only non-state actors therefore contradicts our common understanding of the term and is for that reason highly unlikely to gain currency. May’s association of siege of terror with only revolutionary movements also rules out most of the extreme rightwing, sub-revolutionary, single-issue and basically any non-state actor whose goals fall short of total revolution. Lastly, his use of the phrase ‘bent on overthrowing a dominant

regime' is too narrow of a distinction that dismisses, among other things, any attempts by revolutionary movements to arrive at a concession or compromise of sorts with the established order.

Thus, strict distinctions based on the relative power positions of the actors indirectly compartmentalizes state and non-state terrorism, as both appear to be distinct categories with their own set of agendas. Subsequently, a resort to terrorism is typically explained either in terms of upholding and stabilizing or undermining and destabilizing an existing status quo.

Terrorism is normally linked to state actors when it is committed for upholding a prevailing status quo by those who enjoy monopoly over the power apparatus. States, by virtue of their nature enjoy a monopoly over power and it serves their interest to preserve the status quo that favors such power arrangements. Therefore, when the status quo is challenged and their position as power holders is threatened in some way, they may utilize terrorism as a mean to restore or impose the pre-existing status quo. On the other hand, terrorism is linked to non-state actors when it confronts or undermines the prevailing social and political order. The non-state actors typically do not enjoy monopoly over the power apparatus and seek to reverse and overturn their inferior status by challenging the existing status quo.

Scheffler, for instance, points out that non-state terrorism 'standardly' aims at 'destabilizing or degrading an existing social order' whereas state terrorism aims at 'stabilizing or preserving an existing social order' (2006: 11). It is perhaps true that owing to their relative power positions in the society this is normally how the roles of state and non-state actors are respectively played out. A frequent occurrence, however, does not justify assigning of definite roles to the concerned actors. A state actor can at times undermine, and a non-state actor can equally seek to uphold, an existing social or political order.

In fact, the assertion that non-state actors undermine a prevailing status quo essentially applies to only leftwing and nationalist or separatist revolutionary movements such as the Red Army faction in Germany and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. It does not apply to many extreme rightwing and various other groups that seek to further bolster an existing status quo such the GAL or death squads in Spain and the Loyalists in Northern Ireland. As Laqueur notes, 'The ideology of many

terrorist groups encompasses elements of far-left doctrine as well as those of the extreme right. Slogans change with intellectual fashions- they should neither be ignored nor taken too seriously. The real inspiration underlying terrorism is usually a free-floating activism that can with equal ease turn right or left' (2002: 220).

Similarly, the assertion that a state actor upholds an existing status quo applies to states only domestically. It does not apply to them when they either directly intervene in the affairs of other countries to undermine their status quo or try and achieve the same effect indirectly through supporting or sponsoring some non-state groups. The categorical separation of state and non-state terrorism based on upholding or undermining an existing status quo is therefore not an unqualified distinction.

This analysis clearly shows that the distinction drawn between state and non-state terrorism, on the basis of the existing power structures in the society, is far from satisfactory. When a state actor engages in terrorism, it often does so to restore some previously lost power. It would therefore be somewhat misleading to describe a state as an actor in power. On the other hand, a similar case can also be made for non-state actors that at times exercise the kind of power we normally associate with states. There are numerous examples of such non-state actors that enjoy some degree of power,<sup>30</sup> such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), The Tamil Tigers, and the Basque Nationalist party, ETA. To describe them as actors out of power would be equally inaccurate.

The question of relative power positions is bound to lead to controversy owing to the fact that the term power is itself an essentially contested term that is subject to various inferences and interpretations (See e.g. Lukes, 2005). It can therefore be difficult, not to mention contentious, to distinguish the categories of state and non-state, based solely on their relative power positions in the society. However, before we draw any conclusion, it is worth remembering that even when a state is looking to preserve a status quo and restore some previously lost power, unlike non-state actors, it will never be completely out of power. This is because the moment a state loses all power it ceases to be a state. Therefore, it will always enjoy some degree of power irrespective of how much it may have lost previously. Similarly, a non-state actor, regardless of how powerful it gets, will only ever enjoy limited power, especially in

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<sup>30</sup> Mostly insurgencies and guerrilla movements that often control large swathes of territories.



relation to a state, because the moment it gets more powerful than the state it challenges, it will take over the state apparatus and will cease to be a non-state actor.

Admittedly state and non-state, due to the fluid nature of power, are not entirely exclusive categories, however, it still does not mean that the basic distinction between the two is analytically and conceptually unhelpful. This is because even though the roles of state and non-state actors cannot always be inferred or predetermined, they still designate a certain class of actors that are representative of some power arrangement or distribution in the society. Moreover, specifically in the context of terrorism, the problem is not necessarily with the notions of state and non-state per se, but with pigeonholing the two into some predetermined categories that employ and practice terrorism for completely different reasons because of who and what they are. Categorizing state and non-state actors in such a way, as many academics often do, creates a false and disingenuous distinction.

As this discussion has shown, referring to state terrorism as enforcement terror or regime of terror and non-state terrorism as agitational terror or siege of terror etc. can be fairly misleading. State terrorism is not necessarily impositional and non-state terrorism is not always insurrectional. Owing to the fluid nature of power, it is important that any distinction between the two is flexible enough to grant a provision for reversal of roles between the two.

It is important to point out in the end that in spite of the problems that arise due to the fluid nature of power, the relative power position argument in itself is an extremely important factor. This is because many other definitional and conceptual issues advanced in the discourse, in one way or another, stem from our understanding of the relative power positions of the two actors in the society. Therefore, for a fuller appreciation of all other issues, it is important to acknowledge and appreciate this basic distinction first, even if we ultimately conclude that it is an entirely unhelpful distinction.

Having shown that states and non-state actors defy strict categories and compartmentalization in relation to terrorism, we will now turn our attention to the central question of whether or not states can practice terrorism. And if so, then are there any qualitative differences between state and non-state use of terrorism? To do this, it is imperative to examine the reasons why terrorism is generally associated with

non-state actors and for that we must first attend to the common inference of the term terrorism.

### **The common inference of the term**

The common inference of the term basically entails that the term terrorism is primarily associated with non-state actors. The tendency to see terrorism as a non-state activity has its roots in the widespread anarchist movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Narodnaya Volya, perhaps the most noteworthy of such movements, is a case in point. Over the course of the nineteenth and the twentieth century, the word terrorism (originally associated with the French reign of terror) gradually acquired a wider meaning to account for the increasing non-state violence until it became almost synonymous with non-state terrorism. The idea received extraordinary impetus after WWII as wars amongst states steadily declined and there was a considerable increase in not only the number of non-state actors but also in the violence undertaken by them. Even more so, terrorism as a field of study formally emerged during the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century- in a period of rapid decolonization and just when non-state violence in the form of insurgencies, guerrilla warfare, and rebellions were on the rise globally.<sup>31</sup>

Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not surprising that terrorism is seen first and foremost as a non-state activity. However, the emergence of terrorism studies in such a manner is of course by no means an acceptable reason for such predisposition. The academic scholars, whether positivists, post-positivists, or interpretivists, always examine and analyze the nature, character, and process of the activity and cannot simply be swayed by the prevalence of certain accidental or incidental circumstances that may have led to the emergence of a certain field of studies in the first place. Hence, when it comes to terrorism studies, the claims that it is essentially a study of some non-state activity must also be substantiated by some logical, rational, or scientifically valid facts or arguments. Equally so, those who challenge this assertion, must provide their own strong arguments in support of their opposition.

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<sup>31</sup> This has been discussed in detail in chapter 6.

Treating terrorism as a non-state activity is certainly the most important, not to mention, contentious issue when it comes to the question of terrorist identity. It is also the essence of the actor-centric approach, which maintains that the terrorist activity is not independent of the actor. Strict Adherents of this position hold that there are fundamental differences between terrorism as popularly understood and the activities of the state that are often wrongly interpreted by some as acts of terrorism. There are others still that go on to define terrorism not just as a non-state activity, but also necessarily directed against the state apparatus.<sup>32</sup>

There are different levels of support for the actor-centric position, ranging from absolute to passive. An absolute support entails that states by virtue of their nature cannot commit acts of terrorism. A passive support, on the other hand holds that states may practice terrorism occasionally, however, terrorism in its purest form is essentially a non-state activity. It posits that there are irreconcilable qualitative and quantitative differences between the state and non-state use of terrorism and seeing the two through the same lens would therefore raise serious analytical and methodological challenges.

Notwithstanding these varied levels of support, the prevalent common inference of the word terrorism, especially since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is that of a non-state activity. Put differently, over the course of time, terrorism has largely been associated with the confrontational attempts to challenge, influence, or sway the power apparatus or the status quo. This means that the term terrorism somewhat comes with the tacit assumption that it is a non-state or even an anti-state activity. As Primoratz succinctly observes, ‘In common parlance and in the media, terrorism is as a rule assumed to be an activity of non-state agents in virtue of the very meaning of the word’ (2004: 113).

The common inference of the word terrorism has had a profound impact on not only the way we think about terrorism but also how we go about studying it. A cursory glance at the terrorism scholarship reveals that the use of the term terrorism somewhat comes with the implicit assumption that it is a non-state activity. Whether or not scholars adhere to the actor-centric approach, when they use the word terrorism it almost automatically gestures towards non-state terrorism, unless it has categorically

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<sup>32</sup> For instance, Shaun Gregory in his work uses ‘the term terrorism simply to mean politically motivated violence carried out directly or indirectly against the state’ (2003: 144).

been stated otherwise. This means that when someone talks about state terrorism, they must, out of necessity and convention specify the actor as such or else the general inference of the word terrorism would impulsively gesture towards non-state terrorism.

This assertion can easily be verified by briefly reflecting on some of the major themes in the terrorism discourse. This of course is not to undermine some of the outstanding work that has been done in the field, but merely to draw attention to the common inference of the term and the non-state centric nature of the terrorism discourse.

The historical and chronological accounts of terrorism, for instance, typically engage with only non-state terrorism. Historical roots of much of contemporary terrorism is customarily traced back to non-state actors like the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Zealots in Roman occupied Jerusalem or the 11<sup>th</sup> century Assassins in Persia (See e.g. Laqueur, 2001; Chaliand and Blin, 2007). Such historical inferences are particularly telling, given not only the dearth of non-state actors but also the predominance of autocratic and totalitarian state actors in the past. The categorical absence of state terrorism from our historical references and analyses is a testament of our non-state centric approach to the terrorism problem.

The rationality of the actors engaged in terrorist violence is another important theme in terrorism scholarship. The works of psychologists such as Andrew Silke, Max Taylor, John Horgan, are particularly noteworthy in this vein. Although the overwhelming consensus among scholars in general is that the actors practicing terrorism are rational, however, rational considerations regarding terrorist motivations are discussed solely in relation to non-state actors. This is clearly illustrated by not only the focus of all such researches but also by the choice of the research subjects, who either belong to different non-state terrorist groups or represent the interests of such organizations. The rationality of state actors, on the other hand, is hardly ever questioned, even though dictatorial and authoritarian countries that are led by single personalities could equally raise the rationality argument.

Similarly, other prominent debates in terrorism scholarship, such as its utility and causes, also revolve fundamentally around non-state terrorism. From Robert Pape, Barbara Walter, and Alan Dershowitz's assessment that terrorism works to Max Abrahms and John Mueller's scepticism that it does not, the whole utilitarian debate is

deeply non-state centric. Arguably utilitarian arguments normally do not apply to states in the manner they do to non-state actors, as a state's relatively privileged power position in the society makes it significantly less susceptible to such practical or pragmatic considerations. However, it is also worth remembering that even though a state may always achieve its tangible material objectives, the cost or prospects of losing the respect, trust and support of not only its subjects but also the international community could always raise the utilitarian flag.<sup>33</sup>

Lastly, the subject of root causes of terrorism has been in the spotlight since the inception of terrorism scholarship. Over the years, many scholars have grappled with this very complex problem. The works of Ted Gurr, Tore Bjorgo, Leonard Weinberg, and Ami Pedahzur are especially worth mentioning here. Not surprisingly, what is common in all such works is their non-state centricity. This assertion can be confirmed by looking at some important theories that are advanced to explain the causes of terrorism.<sup>34</sup>

Gurr's theory of relative deprivation is perhaps amongst the most well known contributions. The theory of relative deprivation, first popularized in Gurr's classic book *Why Men Rebel*, explains why seemingly ordinary people resort to violence. He argues that one of the primary reason for violence stems from a profound sense of deprivation that people feel in relation to those they are inferior to. Postulating that 'The potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity' (1970: 24), Gurr develops a framework to explain why ordinary people or non-state actors resort to violence.

Other lesser-known theories advanced to explain the root causes of terrorism also appear to follow a similar pattern. Callaway and Stephen's theory of human security, which links the study of terrorism to 'threats to human security' and points out that terrorism 'always occurs in conjunction with the denial of basic human rights' (2006: 680), clearly applies to non-state actors only. Similarly, Schwartz et al.'s 'conceptually grounded' identity theory that seeks to explore the three interrelated

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<sup>33</sup> The utilitarian debate is fairly extensive and will be discussed in detail in the following continuing chapter.

<sup>34</sup> The objective here is not to assess the validity or reliability of these theories but to show that all such dominant frameworks have been developed to explain non-state behavior only.

dimensions of identity- 'Cultural, Social, and Personal' to explain 'the likelihood of participation in terrorism' (540: 2009), is also entirely non-state centric.

It is important to point out here that it is not that the scholars are unaware of their research limitations, nor are they necessarily implying that states cannot commit acts of terrorism, but the underlying reason for such blatant oversight is often a direct result of the inference drawn from the word terrorism that it is a non-state activity- an inference, that has in many ways, become characteristic of the word terrorism.

An analysis of the major themes thus clearly demonstrates the non-state centric nature of terrorism scholarship. What is most striking about the foregoing discussion is the supposed claim that these theories or paradigms are broadly applicable to all instances of terrorism, when they clearly apply to non-state terrorism only.

Nevertheless, this widespread prevalence of the non-state centric inference is by no means indicative of the academic refusal to apply the word terrorism to states. On the contrary, it merely alludes to the fact that the term terrorism, on its own, is almost instinctively treated as a non-state activity. It is this somewhat intuitive inference of the word terrorism that has prompted some scholars in the field to formally distinguish state terrorism from terrorism proper. Academics that observe such a distinction, perhaps against their wishes, concurrently also extend passive support to the actor-centric position.

The most common way to observe this distinction is through reserving the term terrorism proper for non-state terrorism and referring to state terrorism as state terror or simply using some other affix with state. This means that the term terrorism on its own would only entail non-state terrorism unless explicitly stated otherwise. As Wilkinson observes, 'Normally, in the literature, a state's use of terror is referred to as terror, while substate terror is referred to as terrorism' (2000: 19). Accordingly, Wilkinson employs the same distinction throughout his own work as well.

Given that Wilkinson is a pioneer in the field of terrorism studies, his position on the matter set a precedent that has over the years lent considerable passive support to the actor centric approach. Following his footsteps, many scholars have subsequently developed their own (often novel) ways to account for the non-state inference of terrorism. Schinkel for instance, proposes a 'top down' and a 'bottom up' approach to

account for state and non-state terrorism. 'Terror' he believes, 'refers to actions designed to spread fear by states, and hence it works top down' and 'Terrorism, by contrast, is perpetuated by non-state actors [and] works bottom up' (2009: 183).

Scheffler similarly outlines a difference between terrorism and state terror. He argues that there is 'significant difference between terrorism- even terrorism perpetrated by a state- and state terror' (2006: 15). According to Scheffler, there is 'terrorism of the standard type', which is aimed at 'destabilizing or degrading an existing social order' (p. 11). And although he believes that states may practice it too, he primarily associates the standard type with non-state actors (p. 5).

Anthony Richards also believes that 'terrorism and state terror (or more broadly, 'political terror') are different phenomena' (2015: 51). Defining terrorism as 'use or threat of violence or force with the primary purpose of generating a psychological impact beyond the immediate victims for a political motive' (p. 18), Richards believes that state terror entails much more than terrorism (p. 51). And although state terror can also have a psychological impact but it is primarily aimed at the 'physical elimination of all perceived enemies', which he argues makes it both qualitatively and quantitatively different from terrorism (p. 51-52).

Understandably, one of the reasons why state terrorism is often referred to as state terror (or by some similar denotation) is because of the etymological roots of the word terrorism that can be traced back to the French reign of terror. As Laqueur points out that during the French revolution and in its immediate aftermath, the word terrorism 'was more or less a synonym for reign of terror' (1977: 6). With the French reign of terror as a precursor to modern day terrorism, it is perhaps not so surprising that many academics refer to state terrorism as state terror. What is surprising and perhaps also ironic is that the term state terror is now employed to distinguish state terrorism from terrorism proper when at one point the two terms were almost synonymous.

One can of course argue that such semantic shifts are trivial or to an extent even irrelevant; after all, most of the academics that observe such distinctions usually grant a discretionary space to states, whereby they too can practice standard terrorism. But to say that is to miss the point here. Measuring state terrorism against a standard, proper or real terrorism is in itself demonstrative of the academic predisposition to treat terrorism first and foremost as a non-state activity. Merari's assertion that 'when

states resort to terrorism they do it in the terrorist way' (1999: 56) perhaps best illustrates this predicament.

Although all such typologies and approaches are generally critical of the actor centric approach and are often accompanied by claims that terrorism should be independent of the actor; classifying proper or standard terrorism as a non-state activity conversely renders all such claims somewhat superfluous. For how can terrorism be truly independent of the actor if one believes that standard or proper terrorism necessarily involves a non-state actor? All such practices therefore not only manifest the common inference of the term terrorism but also end up lending passive support to the actor centric approach. To truly appreciate the problem and understand the actor centric approach itself, we will turn our attention to the active or direct support it draws from various academic quarters.

Active support for the actor-centric approach cements and formalizes the non-state inference of the word terrorism. The main thrust of the argument is that there are fundamental differences between terrorism as popularly understood and the actions of the states that are often wrongly judged to be terrorism. Treating the two usages alike would therefore be conceptually and analytically unhelpful.

Bruce Hoffman is amongst the most well known advocates of the actor-centric position. Hoffman is critical of the view that terrorism should be defined independent of the actor. He argues that it is not a satisfactory solution as a definition of terrorism must be able to maintain a clear distinction between state and non-state actors, otherwise it runs the risk of playing 'into the hands of terrorists and their apologists' (2006: 25). Hoffman believes that there are fundamental qualitative differences between terrorism and the violence committed by states and any definition or conceptualization of terrorism must therefore reflect that distinction.

Louise Richardson is another prominent supporter of the actor-centric position. While outlining her 'seven crucial characteristics' of terrorism, she argues that among other things, terrorism must be seen as an 'act of sub-state groups, not states' (2006: 21). Similarly, Conor Gearty believes that a terrorist activity, among other things, mainly encompasses two key ingredients- politics and sub-state actors, and therefore 'it should be possible to restrict the meaning of terrorism not only to sub-state groups but also solely to the violence in which they engage that has a political end' (1991: 151).



It is important to point out at the outset that an actor centric approach and the active support it draws does not necessarily suggest that states have nothing to do with terrorism. Admittedly, it vehemently posits that terrorism should essentially be seen as a non-state activity but it concurrently leaves sufficient room for state direction and support for terrorism. In other words, as opposed to state terrorism, the actor centric approach encourages a discourse on state sponsorship of it. Thus, while Richardson argues that terrorism in itself is an exclusively non-state activity, she still believes that states can use it as an 'instrument of foreign policy' and proposes 'five degrees of separation' between the terrorists and their sponsors, ranging from 'state direction at one end of the spectrum to simple support at the other end' (1999: 210-212).

Thomas Badey, who is fairly sceptical of the notion of 'state terrorism', categorically sets out to distinguish it from 'state supported terrorism'. He is of the opinion that the expression state terrorism is 'in most cases taxonomically incorrect, misleading and often unnecessary... [as] the term obscures rather than clarifies behaviors and existing conditions' (1998: 99-100). While he finds the notion of state terrorism dubious and questionable, he has no qualms in suggesting that 'state support for terrorism undoubtedly exists' as states routinely support the actions of 'non-state actors with similar interests' (p. 101). Despite his categorization as such, Badey still believes that certain state activities in the past, such as the ones observed during the French Revolution, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, or the Stalinist era, 'are more effectively described by the term state terrorism' (p. 100). Such historical references coupled with a failure to find any contemporary use for the term state terrorism clearly demonstrate Badey's proclivity to treat state terrorism as a thing of the past.

Thus, as the focus on terrorist identity especially since the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shifted from state to non-state, terrorism was eventually categorized as a non-state activity by large sections of the academic community. This, among other things, also envisaged a new role for states, whereby they could only lend support to terrorism. Through barring states from practicing terrorism, the actor centric approach effectively encouraged and promoted a discourse on state sponsorship, treating the notion of state terrorism as a thing of the past. In a sense therefore, for actor centric adherents, terrorism has made the transition from state terrorism to state sponsorship, whereby states do not practice terrorism themselves but support non-state actors that

do. As Jackson points out, 'there is an implicit sense that states do not commit terrorism directly, but they may support non-state groups that do' (2008: 381).

Although state sponsorship is clearly a key feature of the actor centric approach specifically and the terrorism scholarship more generally, it is of little avail to our discussion. This is because where the non-state identity is deemed characteristic of terrorism, state sponsorship of it (no matter how common or frequent) in comparison, is never taken to be a necessary or regular feature of terrorism. Moreover, it is also worth noting that state sponsorship only refers to support of some sort and support of any kind typically does little more than assist or facilitate an activity. The nature and character of any activity is largely independent of the support it receives.

Hence, other than in its intensity and frequency, the terrorist activity will not be any different in its nature and conduct, regardless of the manner and fashion in which it is supported. State sponsorship therefore has little to no bearing on conceptualizing and defining terrorism and for that reason will not be discussed any further in this thesis.

It is important to also point out here that an active support for the actor centric approach does not necessarily mean that the violence committed by states is morally superior or any less condemnable than terrorism. Nor does it entail that such an active support is driven by revulsion for terrorist violence or a desire to limit the 'evil' to non-state actors to reprieve states of such heinous and immoral crimes (See e.g. Jackson, 2008; Dexter, 2012).

For instance, in spite of Gearty's assertion that terrorism should be seen as 'violent political subversion by sub-state groups' (1991: 151), he denounces and condemns state violence in the strongest possible terms. Gearty believes that state violence, both in terms of its scale and brutality, dwarfs terrorism in all its forms and manifestations (2011: 50-71). Hoffman also notes that states and armed forces bring about far more death and destruction than non-state terrorists (2006: 26). Similarly, Richardson is also very critical of the violence committed by states and condemns it unreservedly (2006). A support for actor centric approach should therefore not be equated with moral approval of state violence, as the distinction is not necessarily made to isolate the morally reprehensible (bad) form of violence from the supposedly acceptable and legitimate (good) violence (See e.g. Dexter, 2012).

From our discussion it becomes evident that active support for the actor centric approach is heavily influenced by the common inference of the term. However, it will also be wrong to assume that the actor centric approach is driven entirely by the common inference of the term terrorism. The distinction in fact is often made because many scholars actually believe that there is something intrinsic about the nature of terrorist violence that makes it a non-state activity. Alternatively, they may also believe that there is something about the nature of non-state or state actors that permit or forbid them from practicing terrorism.

To understand the problem in its entirety, we must therefore discuss in detail the reasons that supposedly make terrorism a non-state activity. Starting first with the most frequently cited difference regarding legitimacy and legality.

### **Legitimacy and legality**

‘The relationship between legality and legitimacy is one of the most important themes in legal and political philosophy’ (Dyzenhaus, 1997: 1). In theory, legitimacy broadly refers to the source and origin of law, and is thought to be rooted in popular consent and will of the people. It is the power or authority, willingly surrendered to a select body to make and enforce laws in order to primarily provide order and security to the consenting subjects (See e.g. Rosenfeld, 2001: 8-9; Jackson et al., 2012: 1-2). In other words, a state cannot be considered truly legitimate if it does not enjoy the support of majority of its subjects.

Legality, on the other hand, corresponds only to the official status of some preexisting authority, normally a state (Rosenfeld, 2001: 20). Although it gives the impression that it too reflects the consent of the people but that is largely due to the strong interplay between the words legality and legitimacy, as the two terms are often treated as synonyms. The term legality, to an extent, is therefore independent of the democratic will of the people and merely refers to the process or observance of law by some designated authority.

Thus, legitimacy, in a sense, refers to the source or origin of some existing law, whereas legality refers only to its due process and observance. Normatively speaking, legal authority should only come about once legitimacy has duly been acquired. In

reality however the relationship between the two is more fluid and not always as straightforward as is often thought to be.

It is not uncommon, for instance, to come across instances where one of the two is often found wanting. Dictatorial and totalitarian regimes e.g., normally do not enjoy legitimacy yet they can still claim to be legal. On the other hand, some non-state actors, particularly nationalist groups, due to their lack of hold or share in the ruling power apparatus, clearly lack legality. However, it is still possible for them to enjoy wide public support and therefore claim legitimacy on those grounds. Also, since they challenge the state apparatus and its legitimacy, they denounce the legality of the state as nothing more than mere façade. As Thorup points out that a revolutionary actor ‘places legitimacy above legality in the claim that their rebellion may be illegal seen from the state but that it is legitimate from the viewpoint of the people, history, justice freedom, etc., and that it therefore constitutes a true legality in opposition to the sham justice of the state’ (2008: 345).

This distinction, however, corresponds more to our theoretical or normative understanding of the two terms. In reality, to stay in power, an actor must possess both legitimacy and legality and without power any claim to either of the two (as the following discussion shall demonstrate) would be strongly contested.

In principle, a state is required to secure legitimacy from its willing subjects but in reality there are a number of intervening variables that often play a far more significant role in determining the outcome. One of the most important of such variables is international recognition. Here it is important to acknowledge the difference between international sympathy, condemnation and formal recognition. It is formal international recognition, which all political actors normally seek in their drive for legitimacy. However, in most of instances, they (the non-state actors in particular) only manage to secure either sympathy or condemnation, both of which, in terms of achieving legality and legitimacy, amount to almost nothing. There are numerous examples in the world today of non-state actors that enjoy substantial popular support and attract international sympathy for their cause but yet are unable to secure the desired legitimacy because of lack of formal international recognition. The Kurdish population in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria is a case in point.

The other important variable is the relative power position of the state that the group seeking legitimacy is confronting. If the group is confronted by a state that is not only significantly more powerful but also enjoys some degree of international recognition, then no amount of popular or international support for the group's cause will enable it to secure the desired legitimacy. The Palestinians confronting the powerful and widely recognized state of Israel provide perhaps the most fitting example. On the other hand, powerful dictatorial and totalitarian countries, such as North Korea, may not even enjoy any substantial international support or recognition. Yet, due to their total control over the power apparatus, they are able to not only effectively monopolize both legitimacy and legality but also fend off international condemnation directed their way. This is why Thorup notes, 'legality and legitimacy; the state incarnates and monopolizes them both' (2008: 345).

Legitimacy is therefore often determined by realistic considerations rather than some ideal academic qualification. A large number of non-state actors that at least in theory deserve or qualify for legitimacy, often fail in their ambitions. Whereas a substantial number of undeserving state actors may carry on enjoying legitimacy in one form or another. Thus, to hold or a share in power not only facilitates but at times also substantiates an unwarranted claim to legitimacy, while a lack of power could equally deprive a justified claim to legitimacy.

Since legality is essentially concerned with the process, observance or simply the practice of law, it therefore cannot exist in a vacuum and would require some form of preexisting authority or power structure to function. In other words, legality can only be observed by actors that control or share the power apparatus, regardless of how flawed or unfounded their ultimate claim to legitimacy may be. So even though in principle it is legitimacy that is supposed to facilitate the observance of legality, in reality it is actually the hold over power that allows manipulation of legitimacy and imposition of legality.

Thus, legality and legitimacy in a sense reinforce each other as the former could be manipulated to impose the latter.<sup>35</sup> To state that legitimacy and legality are different is

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<sup>35</sup> This is of course not to suggest that real legitimacy propped up by popular electorate does not exist, but instead to demonstrate the successful manipulation of these concepts by powerful stakeholders for relative advantage.

true to an extent in theory but certainly not in practice. An actor practicing legality will always either have, or make a false or unjustified, claim to legitimacy. Whereas an actor claiming to be legitimate will never truly be legitimate unless it takes over the power apparatus and enforces legality. The interplay between the two is therefore a fairly complex affair and attempts to formally distinguish them are far from satisfactory.<sup>36</sup>

The aforementioned gap between theory and practice of course does not mean that we should affix the terms legitimacy and legality unconditionally to just state actors. It is true that the terms would normally be associated with states since they typically possess monopoly over the power apparatus. However, as it was discussed earlier in this chapter, a non-state actor is also capable of holding some form of power in the society. It may not enjoy legitimacy and legality in the same way a state does, but given that the two terms are flexible and fluid and have no fixed meaning or interpretation, it is essentially therefore a matter of degree to which state and non-state actors enjoy them.

Moreover, it is also important that the theoretical and normative considerations regarding legitimacy and legality are not ignored altogether. The requirements of consent and popular support form the basis of modern civilized society and therefore to say that a non-state actor that otherwise clearly reflects the will of the people cannot be legitimate and a state actor that suppresses and squashes any form of dissent is legitimate, is ethically and morally unacceptable. Further reasons for not affixing the terms to only state actors will be discussed later on, but first it is important to see how legitimacy and legality relate to terrorism specifically.

Since terrorism, among other things, is often deemed to be an illegitimate and illegal form of violence, therefore a state, by virtue of its nature, is believed to be incapable of performing it. And if a state is unable to engage in terrorism then it also cannot be labeled terrorist properly. Gearty for instance observes the reasons why states like Israel and the U.S. are able to evade the label terrorist: 'The Americans escaped this categorization for the same reason that Israel invariably does: their violence was

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<sup>36</sup> Owing not just to the futility but also the misguided nature of the argument, this discussion will therefore not observe a formal distinction between the two and will use the terms somewhat interchangeably.

authorized by a government and was executed by the official armed forces of a state' (1991: 85-86).

The question of legality and legitimacy inadvertently takes us to the issue of morality that has been discussed at length in the previous chapter. Where the last chapter mainly discussed the issue of morality in respect to the victim of terrorism, here we will briefly analyze it in relation to the actor responsible for terrorism.

The question of morality and legitimacy, fundamentally rooted in the *jus ad bellum* tenet of the just war tradition, places significant emphasis on the principles of legitimacy and legality. The main contention is that for violence to be morally justified it must also be legitimate, or simply that legitimate violence can only be sanctioned by a recognizable legal authority. Since under the Westphalian system of sovereignty, such authority rests solely with the state, therefore, only the violence authorized by a state should really be considered legitimate and justified. The just war tradition therefore grants states a monopoly over legitimate use of force.

Thus, in strict accordance with the principles of *jus ad bellum*, violence would be judged unjustified if it is undertaken by an actor that lacks the necessary legal authority. It is the absence of this legal sanction that essentially challenges the legitimacy and in effect also the justification of all non-state violence.

Lionel McPherson, in an intellectually stimulating paper, challenges the conventional wisdom regarding the morality of terrorism. He argues that the reason why most people find terrorism immoral and objectionable is not because of the commonly popularized belief that it deliberately targets innocents or non-combatants, but because 'the terrorists do not have adequate authority to undertake political violence' (2007: 524). In support of his argument, McPherson points out that 'The principle challenge for those who believe that terrorism is distinctively wrong' because it targets non-combatants, 'lies in morally accounting for non-combatant casualties of conventional wars' (p. 525).

Those who see terrorism as egregiously immoral and wars as legitimate raise two important points. The first and the central point is regarding supreme emergency, a provision provided by the doctrine of double effect. The second, and to a degree a

lesser important point, concerns the legitimacy of the actor and involves a comparison of war and terrorism.

The legitimacy argument basically suggests that since wars are typically fought between states, therefore, they enjoy a legal and official status. States, by virtue of their nature and international obligations, are expected to respect the established norms and rules of violent engagement. Failing which, their actions would be categorized as war crimes and the offending party would subsequently be subjected to a due process of law. In comparison, since terrorism is believed to be exercised by non-state actors, therefore, it does not have any legal or official standing and the actors for that reason are also not expected to respect any of the established rules of violent engagement. As Hoffman argues that in wars between states ‘there are rules and accepted norms of behavior’ whereas in comparison, the terrorists ‘have violated all these rules’ (2006: 25-26). And even though the armed forces do occasionally break the rules of wars ‘the term “war crimes” is used to describe these acts and there is an international system in place (no matter how flawed) to account for such crimes’ (p. 28).

The distinction drawn between state and non-state use of violence, based on the principle of legitimacy and legality, suffers from some serious interrelated shortcomings. First, the distinction essentially ends up tying legitimacy with morality almost unconditionally by setting forth the condition that for a political actor to be moral it must first and foremost be legitimate. Whereas the relationship between legitimacy and morality is far from absolute, and setting the former as a prerequisite gives the impression that the two essentially reinforce each other and are inseparable. The condition of legitimacy in other words gives the false impression that a legitimate actor cannot be immoral or that an illegitimate actor can never be moral.

Numerous actors otherwise deemed to be legitimate have, over the years, committed acts that would be considered immoral. The 1972 U.S. bombing of Hanoi in North Vietnam that resulted in more than one thousand deaths is a case in point. Similarly, some non-state actors that often lack legitimacy and legality, in the conventional sense of the terms, often renounce violence and engage in peaceful political process. The successful assimilation of the Provisional Irish Republican Army in the political process of Northern Ireland is a prominent example.



Second, the attribute of legitimacy is not an automatic qualification that can easily be bestowed on a state just because of its relative power position in the society. Instead, it is a privilege that must only be acquired after satisfying certain necessary preconditions, such as representing the interest and will of the people. Moreover, acquiring legitimacy is only the first step, retaining and sustaining it in the long run, comes with its own sets of challenges and stipulations (such as maintaining and providing liberty, order, and security to all its subjects and respecting international norms). This, in other words, means that legitimacy is not permanent or simply guaranteed to states because of their privileged power position. It must meet some prerequisites, otherwise it can either be challenged or revoked.

Here it is worth mentioning again that the notion of legitimacy, owing to its flexible nature, can of course sometimes be manipulated. This is predominantly made possible by an actor's hold or share in the power apparatus. It is of foremost importance to acknowledge the difference between forced or manipulated legitimacy as opposed to what legitimacy normatively stands for. A manipulated legitimacy is ultimately not representative of its subjects and will therefore always be open to contestation internally in the form of dissent and popular uprising. Furthermore, even though it may succeed in getting some limited international recognition, it will never be able to secure universal acknowledgement and recognition from other states. The academic community in particular is therefore mostly critical of using the terms legitimacy and legality, and a large majority strictly refrains from affixing the terms unconditionally to state actors.

Third, the condition of legitimacy often fails to provide a working provision for the cornerstone of the modern state system, namely the cardinal principle of self-determination. It either presupposes self-determination or simply takes it for granted. Even more so, it tends to grant a justificatory space to some state actors that neither uphold nor embody the principle of self-determination. Non-state groups looking to assert their right of self-determination, more often than not, lack legitimacy or any official status. Their subsequent resort to violence, regardless of their circumstances, will be considered unjustified. Hence, the prerequisite of legitimacy for determining the conduct of violent political activity indirectly violates our most basic fundamental right of self-determination.

Lastly, the condition not only sees a strong correlation between a state and legitimacy but also gives the impression that the two always go together and complement each other. Treating the two as counterparts is to an extent deceptive as the relationship between a state and legitimacy is far from straightforward. The notions of legitimacy and legality are not carved into stone and cannot simply be attached to specific actors.

The terms are in fact more fluid, both in their nature and application. This flexibility allows all actors, state or non-state, to exercise them. Non-state actors, supposedly lacking legitimacy, on occasion can and have successfully challenged the state apparatus. Thereby not only changing the status quo in their favor but in the process also becoming, in the conventional sense of the term, legitimate actors. The terms legitimacy and legality are therefore not rigid terminologies and are transferable from one actor to another. The move of the African National Congress (ANC) from a disavowed non-state terrorist group to political centre stage in South Africa is a case in point.

Given these shortcomings, it is perhaps not surprising that the academic community is widely skeptical of this distinction. Legitimacy, as it has been demonstrated, is not the sole province of states. The term itself is far too flexible and fluid to be affixed to any specific actor. It can readily be extended to state and non-state actors alike and is therefore not an adequate distinguishing criteria. As Held points out, 'the requirement of legitimate authority should not be thought impossible for non-state groups that make use of violence (including terrorism) to meet' (2008: 68). If legitimacy cannot be tied down to an actor then it means it also cannot be the reason why non-state violence should be deemed unjustified and immoral. The assertion then that terrorism is fundamentally wrong because it lacks legitimate authority is therefore largely inaccurate.

Thus, the academic tendency to see terrorism as not only a non-state but also an immoral activity purely due to issues related to legitimacy and legality is fairly myopic and shortsighted, as it fails to scratch below the surface and engages with the issue only superficially. Legitimacy and legality, especially in the context of terrorism, should instead be treated as fluid concepts that simply cannot be affixed to only state actors.

If legitimacy and legality are inadequate criteria, then is it the nature of state and non-state actors and their respective power positions in the society that determines whether or not they would resort to terrorism? Although the question of relative power positions was taken up earlier in the chapter, the issue of associating terrorism with non-state actors primarily due to their relatively inferior power position in the society has not been discussed so far. It is an issue that merits greater attention and will therefore be discussed in detail now.

### **Terrorism inherently a weak actor strategy**

Drawn directly from the relative power positions of actors in the society, the main thrust of this argument is that terrorism is a form of violence that can only ever be employed by weak actors.<sup>37</sup> Since non-state actors are always relatively weaker than states, therefore by default only they can practice terrorism. State as a relatively powerful actor would subsequently resort to some other form of violence, when confronting a non-state actor or its subjects. This is because a state would always be relatively more powerful than the dissent it is resisting or the non-state actors it is confronting.

The claim that terrorism is inherently a weak actor strategy is primarily based on the idea that weak actors normally lack the necessary material and personnel means to engage in conventional forms of warfare. As Brian Jenkins observes, 'Terrorism requires only a small investment, certainly far less than what it costs to wage a conventional war' (1974: 13). Scheffler also notes that 'Figuratively and often literally, terrorism offers the biggest bang for one's buck' (2006: 9). Arguably, among the various forms of low intensity violence, terrorism, in terms of resources required, is perhaps the least demanding. It is therefore deemed customary for a weak actor (lacking the necessary resources to engage in other forms of violence) to opt for terrorism.

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<sup>37</sup> It is important to point out that terrorism is primarily seen as a weak actor strategy in asymmetrical conflicts involving a state (powerful) actor and non-state (weak) actor.

By this logic, the choice of opted violence in theory should also correspond to the respective strength and ability of the actor. Thus the most powerful actor in a conflict should resort to some form of oppression. An equally powerful actor should resort to open wars or pitched battles with its adversary. A relatively weaker opponent should resort to insurgency and guerrilla warfare. And lastly, the weakest of all actors would have no other choice but to resort to terrorism.

This rather straightforward postulation is promptly endorsed by the theoretical assertion that terrorism is normally the first form of violence to emerge when an asymmetrical conflict first escalates. This is believed to be due to the limited and restricted capacity of the weak actor when it first challenges its stronger opponent with violence. William Miller explains these different stages of violence that correspond to the ability and relative power of the actor. He points out that ‘rural guerilla warfare develops in stages beginning with terrorism, moving to guerrilla war, and culminating in a series of pitched battles pitting conventionally organized insurgents against remnants of the state’s military’ (2000: 64).<sup>38</sup>

Not only is it argued that terrorism is the first form of violence to emerge but it is also believed that an actor may resort to terrorism if it suffers substantial setbacks, loses its dominant or powerful position and becomes weaker through conventional engagement with its adversary. Such failures could prompt a weak actor (previously engaged in other forms of violence) to revert back to terrorism. In a way, therefore, terrorism provides the last or the only alternative to continue a violent struggle. As Crenshaw points out, ‘Terrorism is explained as a result of an organization’s struggle for survival’ (1987: 13). In a discussion on the difficulties faced by urban guerrillas while fighting in enemy heartland, Miller also notes that ‘These limitations restrict insurgents to a single method of continuing their struggle against the government, namely terrorism’ (2000: 70).

Furthermore, assuming that the actors are rational, they will only ever be able to choose a form of violence that their respective capabilities permit. Therefore, opting for the least demanding form of violence by the weakest actor appears to be the most obvious and rational thing to do. In other words, terrorism provides the only possible

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<sup>38</sup> Miller later concludes that ‘the progression from terrorism to guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare is seldom so smooth. Often there occurs a blending of methods...’ (p. 64).

alternative to actors that seek change through violent means but lack the necessary resources to do so in a conventional way. A resort to terrorism therefore is often not out of choice or preference but is instead a matter of necessity obligated because of an actor's weak position (provided of course that an actor wants to use violence to achieve its ends).

Alternatively, this also goes on to suggest that a stronger actor should not opt for terrorism since it possesses the necessary capabilities to choose other forms of violence. It can of course be argued here that if terrorism is the cheapest and most convenient form of violence available then it would be somewhat counterintuitive to not utilize it. It would certainly make little sense if a stronger actor chooses a more costly violent option, simply because it can, when cheaper and less demanding alternatives are readily available.

Rationally speaking however, a stronger actor that has the ability to choose from a range of violent alternatives will only opt for the cheapest option if it is cost-effective and high yielding. If, for some reason, the cheapest violent alternative is deemed to be ineffective, in so far as it is judged to be incapable of achieving the desired objectives, then it will be rejected in favor of other alternatives (a luxury that weak actors normally do not have). Therefore, a strong actor will only ever resort to terrorism, the least demanding form of violence, if it is deemed capable of achieving the desired goals. Clearly, it would make no rational sense to resort to terrorism if it is completely ineffective or counterproductive.

Thus, opting for terrorism by actors with violent alternatives at their disposal is ultimately dependent upon terrorism's utility, chances of success and overall effectiveness. This subsequently necessitates an evaluation of the utilitarian argument, which is a frequently debated and an extremely contested issues in the terrorism scholarship. However, before we discuss it in detail, it is essential first to acknowledge that ultimately any and all utilitarian considerations regarding terrorism depend considerably on how it is defined and understood. For instance, if terrorism was simply defined as 'killing of civilians' then it would be regarded as a highly effective mode of violence.

However, owing to a lack of consensus on terrorism's definition, the term utilitarianism is used somewhat loosely and normally only refers to success related to

the objectives of the actors practicing terrorism. It is for this reason that the following analysis also assesses the utilitarian argument solely in terms of success related to the objectives of the actors practicing terrorism. Given that there is no common understanding or definition of terrorism, this analysis is certainly not without its flaws. To determine the utility of an ill-defined activity is always going to be treacherous ground. To begin with, assessing an actor's chances of success when it is not clear whether it even practices terrorism is indeed seriously problematic. However, this is not a problem that is unique to a utilitarian evaluation of terrorism. For as long as the definition of terrorism is contested, its assessment in any form or kind will be highly questionable.

Nevertheless, utilitarian considerations, whether terroristic or not, are generally associated with chances of success in relation to the objectives of the concerned actors. With regard to terrorism, although scholars generally and perhaps even understandably approach the problem through their own subjective lenses, most still view it as a low-intensity and least demanding form of political violence. For our discussion, it will therefore suffice to adhere to this least common denominator. It is important to also remember that any academic utilitarian evaluation of terrorism, as a rule, also implicitly gestures towards its most outstanding features like non-combatant targeting, generation of fear etc. However, owing to lack of universal consensus, it is perhaps best not to specify any feature in particular. Instead, for now it will be more helpful to evaluate the academic debate as it is with its embedded allusion to terrorism's distinguishing features.

The academic debate, therefore, on the face of it mainly concerns the usefulness, practicality, and effectiveness of terrorist violence in achieving the objectives of its practitioner. A cursory examination of the discourse reveals that the debate is primarily between those who believe that terrorism works and others who argue that it does not. Those who believe that terrorism works posit that terrorism is low-cost high impact violence that regularly delivers the desired results. They consider terrorism as a rational activity and those who employ it as rational actors. The fact that terrorism duly achieves the objectives of its perpetrator is precisely the reason why it is so frequently and routinely employed. Crenshaw, for instance, declares that 'The reason for the frequency of terrorism is that it is an effective strategy; its benefits outweigh its costs' (2011: 24). Alan Dershowitz also notes that 'Terrorism will persist because

it often works, and success breeds repetition' (2002: 6). Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter similarly point out that 'Terrorism often works. Extremist organizations such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, and the Tamil Tigers engage in terrorism because it frequently delivers the desired response' (2006: 49).

Such assertions over the years have robustly been challenged and it is instead argued that terrorism is an ineffective mode of violence that largely fails to achieve its desired objectives. Scholars that adhere to this view, normally point to different non-state actors and the failure of these actors to achieve their goals through utilization of terrorism. In a 1976 article *The Futility of Terrorism*, Laqueur concluded that terrorism is largely an unproductive and a futile enterprise destined to fail (99-105). According to Thomas Schelling, 'terrorism almost never appears to accomplish anything politically significant' (1991: 20). Similarly, Loren Lomasky believes that terrorism largely fails to advance the claimed political objectives of its perpetrators (1991: 89). David Rapoport, although not entirely dismissive of terrorism's overall effectiveness, also notes that 'Success is very rare in the history of non-state terror, no matter what the form or time examined' (2008: 186).

Among other critics of the utilitarian argument, Max Abrahms is perhaps one scholar that stands out prominently. Overly sceptical of terrorism's utility, he has dedicated his career to explaining why terrorism does not work. He strongly criticizes scholars such as Pape who argue that terrorism is a winning and successful strategy (2008). Abrahms makes his point by analyzing the stated objectives of various classified terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, the PKK, and the Abu-Sayyaf group. He observes that an overwhelming majority of terrorist groups fail to receive any concessions from their target governments and largely fall short of achieving anything substantial. This, Abrahms concludes, 'suggests not only that terrorism is an ineffective instrument of coercion, but that its poor success rate is inherent to the tactic of terrorism itself' (2006: 76).

In between these two opposing viewpoints, there still is a third position, which posits that even though terrorism tends to fail most of the times or at least in the long run, it still manages to achieve some of its short term or limited objectives.<sup>39</sup> As Weinberg

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<sup>39</sup> The long-term objectives of terrorism may include change of status quo in one's favor, complete overthrow of the existing social order, control over the power apparatus etc. Short-time objectives on

explains, 'terrorist campaigns very rarely achieve the long-term goals or strategic objectives of those groups waging them. On those few occasions when the groups succeed it is almost always in the realm of their tactical aims' (2012: 46).

Terrorism as we know is a rational activity, to suggest that terrorism is entirely ineffective and counter-productive would therefore blatantly contradict one of its most fundamental tenets. It is for this reason that even scholars such as Abrahms who argue that terrorism is ineffective do not go on to suggest that the actors who practice them are irrational too. Instead, they try and analyze the resort to terrorism by means of some alternate explanation. This, among other things, often supposes the terrorist actions to be wrongly conceived or poorly thought out. Abrahms, for instance, points out that in spite of the futility of terrorist violence, many actors still overestimate its effectiveness because they tend to 'draw false analogies from successful guerrilla campaigns, which are indeed comparatively profitable' (2012: 47).

What Abrahms and others like him are doing essentially is isolating the actor from the activity and considering only the former as rational that is somehow wrongly judging the latter to be effective. This separation of the seemingly irrational activity from the actor however raises serious questions about the logic of rationality itself. The problem with this approach is not that rational actors may occasionally make irrational decisions (for any rational actor may miscalculate from time to time), but more so the advocacy of the consistency and frequency with which such irrational decisions are made. If terrorism is an ineffective and irrational activity then the rate of its occurrence inadvertently casts doubts over the rationality of its perpetrators. Rationally speaking then, the popularity of terrorism as a widespread choice of violence and its continual deployment becomes highly questionable. Why would so many actors repeatedly misjudge the utility and effectiveness of terrorist violence? How many false past analogies could the terrorists possibly draw?

Separating the supposedly rational actors from their seemingly irrational behavior creates an unsustainable and a contradictory façade, vulnerable to easy opposition, dissension and contestation. Logically speaking, the two positions are largely inconsistent, incoherent, and unsustainable. It is for this reason that the view that

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the other hand, could range from change of government policy, release of political prisoners, publicity, or simply generation of fear.



terrorism is completely ineffective does not enjoy much popularity in the terrorism discourse. Instead, most of the scholars normally adhere to the third position (that terrorism tends to be ineffective in its long-term ambitions but effective in its short-term pursuits). The seemingly contradictory academic positions that terrorism is effective and ineffective, to a large extent, are therefore often merely generalized assertions (unless stated otherwise) that correspond to its limited or long-term objectives respectively. Viewed in this context, it becomes clear that Crenshaw's assessment that terrorism is effective is perhaps more so a reference to its short-term achievements and Rapoport's observation regarding the rarity of terrorism's success is more of an indication of the failure of the perpetrators to achieve their ultimate or long-term objectives.

On the face of it, it certainly appears that terrorism does not achieve its objectives, at least not in the manner other more conventional forms of violence do. This, however, should not prompt scholars to deduce that terrorism is an entirely ineffective form of violence. As will become clear in this discussion, terrorism, often in its own distinctive way, frequently manages to achieve its various objectives. Such achievements may not appear substantial or consequential, insofar as an actor's ultimate or final objective is concerned. Conversely still, they seem fairly significant in terms of an actor's short-term objectives.

The assertion that the terrorist tactic or strategy is foredoomed to fail can therefore be grossly misleading. Terrorism, much like other forms of violence, can both be successful and unsuccessful. And even though it is mostly effective in its short-term pursuits, the possibility that terrorism can sometimes also play a role in achieving some long-term goals cannot be ruled out by definition. Various previously proscribed terrorist groups have been successful in achieving their long-term or ultimate objectives. The National Liberation Front in Algeria and the African National Congress in South Africa are notable examples. With such historical precedents, there is also no logical or rational basis for suggesting that terrorism can never achieve its long-term objectives.

Seeing terrorism as a weak or essentially a non-state actor strategy, taken up due to lack of alternatives and only capable of achieving some limited or insignificant objectives, stands strongly in contradiction to both logic and history. The fact that

terrorism is mostly effective in its short-term pursuits does not mean that generalizations regarding its long-term success should be permissible.

Given this utility and effectiveness of terrorist violence, the relative strength of the actor as a determining factor for taking up terrorism becomes highly questionable. Subsequently, whether an actor utilizes terrorism in the beginning of the conflict or later on, is to an extent also somewhat irrelevant. What matters essentially is that terrorism can be successful and as long as terrorism is an effective mode of violence, the probability that it can and will be employed by any rational actor at any time is also significantly high.

It can of course be argued that since the long-term successes of terrorism are far too uncommon and infrequent, therefore they have very little, if at all any, analytical, explanatory or descriptive value. As a result, they should instead be treated as mere anomalies or exceptions that have little to no bearing on the functioning and understanding of terrorism. Even if we accept this position and suppose that terrorism is only successful in achieving some short-term objectives and any chance of its long-term successes are exceptionally rare, it can still be seen as a useful tool, especially if an actor is looking to secure only some short-term objectives.

To put it differently, not all actors necessarily have long-term ambitions and some could only be pursuing some limited or short-term goals. Given its short-term utility, terrorism in such cases can be a very useful and effective tool. Furthermore, if an actor has a range of violent alternatives at its disposal then it can simply choose a form of violence that best corresponds to its specific needs. This would mean that an actor could simply utilize terrorism for its short-term pursuits and choose not to use it for its long-term ambitions.

Now since a state, as opposed to a non-state actor, has a range of violent alternatives at its disposal, it would make perfect sense to use a form of violence that would correspond to its specific needs. Given that terrorism is a useful tool for pursuing some short-term objectives, a state may therefore resort to it for addressing some immediate issues. At the same time, a state also possesses the resources to employ other forms of violence to achieve its long-term term objectives. In other words, a state can employ other forms of violence to achieve certain objectives that terrorism alone cannot furnish. In strictly utilitarian language, a state may simply pick and

choose from a range of violent alternatives or even use them in combination with each other; the choice would subsequently depend upon the kind and nature of the objective it is pursuing.

The same, however, does not necessarily apply to non-state actors. Where a state can choose between a range of violent alternatives, a non-state actor in comparison, owing to lack of resources, is fairly restricted in its choices. As a result of this, certain non-state actors may feel somewhat compelled to resort to terrorism, as their weak position would not permit them to choose any other mode of violent resistance. In a sense therefore, non-state actors often do not have a choice between different forms of violence but instead only a choice between violence and non-violence and even though terrorism may not be the most effective course of action, it may well be the only course of action available. A non-state actor that cannot employ any other form of violence other than terrorism runs the risk of never accomplishing its long-term objectives. In this respect therefore, it makes more sense for a state to resort to terrorism than non-state actors.

This may seem like an unusual proposition given that utilitarian considerations regarding terrorist violence are normally reserved for only non-state actors. To suggest that it would be more logical for states to utilize terrorism can understandably be puzzling. However, in light of the discussion above, this assertion does not seem too farfetched. A non-state actor is fairly restricted in terms of the violent alternatives it possesses. For this reason, often at times it may not have any other option but to resort to terrorism (provided of course it wants to achieve its goals through violent means). And since terrorism has very little chance of achieving long-term objectives, the probability that the non-state actor would fail in the long run are also significantly high.

A state, on the other hand, may only utilize terrorism for its immediate or interim objectives, employing it sporadically or in combination with other forms of violence to achieve the desired effect. Hence, a state is able to get all the short-term benefits from terrorism, while ultimately relying on other violent alternatives to realize its long-term goals, whereas a resort to terrorism by a weak non-state actor is often a resort to terrorism alone. Terrorism can therefore help yield greater result for states than non-state actors, as a state has considerably greater chances of overall success

when it employs terrorism. This proposition may challenge and contradict the conventional wisdom regarding the utility of terrorist violence, but it is nonetheless fairly consistent with the rational choice theory.

To conclude therefore, a state may not only utilize terrorism, but in fact is able to utilize it far more successfully and effectively than non-state actors. Hence, where the argument that terrorism never works was earlier found wanting, there the academic assertion that terrorism is a winning or successful tactic, is clearly more applicable to states than non-state actors. The argument that terrorism is essentially a weak actor strategy and that states will not practice it because they have other violent alternatives is therefore, at least on utilitarian grounds, fundamentally flawed. If anything, as this discussion has shown, the states stand to gain significantly more from utilizing terrorism than non-state actors.

All the reasons given in favor of the actor centric position- to show that terrorism is essentially a non-state activity- have so far proven to be unsatisfactory. Hence, if the legitimacy and legality argument is essentially misplaced and if terrorism has little to do with the relative power position of the actor, then is there something intrinsic about the nature of terrorist violence itself that makes it a non-state activity? It is this question that we will now turn our attention to. However, owing to the lengthy and critical nature of this debate, it will be discussed separately in the following continuing chapter.

#### 4. The Theatre of Terrorism

If the commonly popularized factors of legitimacy and legality and the relative power positions of state and non-state actors fall short, then in order to validate the argument that terrorism is a non-state activity, there must be something inherent about the nature of terrorist violence by virtue of which it is seen or treated as such. It is important for that reason to turn to characteristics that are most commonly associated with terrorism.

The various attributes of terrorism discussed so far in the thesis are not suggestive in any way that terrorism is a non-state activity. Terror or generation of fear, for instance, is not something that is unique to terrorism or non-state actors specifically. Large-scale violence, such as ordinary wars, normally involves states and regularly generates terror or fear in a target population. Similarly, targeting of innocent civilians or non-combatants is again a technique that is neither distinctive of terrorism nor of non-state actors. States have routinely been engaged in activities that have resulted in civilian or non-combatant casualties. To suggest therefore that terrorism is a non-state activity because it generates fear or targets non-combatants (whether deliberately or not) would be profoundly inadequate.

Similar conclusions can also be drawn for almost all other popularized attributes of terrorism such as coercion, repetition, indiscriminate targeting and so on. There is, however, one attribute of terrorism in particular that has traditionally been associated with non-state actors only and therefore deserves greater attention here. In fact, if this attribute does turn out to be an indispensable characteristic of terrorism (that also happens to be unique to only non-state actors), then a strong case can indeed be made for considering terrorism as a non-state activity.

Typically referred to as theatrical, the attribute was first popularized by Brian Jenkins. In his 1974 paper *International Terrorism: A New Kind of Warfare*, Jenkins famously stated that 'terrorism is theatre' (p. 4). Jenkins explains that what makes terrorism theatrical is the manner in which terrorist attacks are 'carefully choreographed to

attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press'. 'Terrorism', therefore, he believes 'is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims' (Ibid). Given its importance in both popular and academic discourses, Jenkins's assertion can considerably benefit from a more detailed and systematic analysis.

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The theatrical attribute is commonly understood in terms of the physical manifestation of the terrorist act, which among other things is believed to be dramatic, shocking, and above all newsworthy. As George Fletcher's assertion illustrates, 'Terrorism always has a theatrical aspect. Effective terrorism is always a dramatic event that captures headlines for long periods. It is unexpected with great shock value' (2006: 909). However, as this discussion shall demonstrate, there is significantly more to the theatrical attribute, which is hardly ever fully realized.

An ordinary theatre comprises of three essential components: a stage, backstage, and a live audience. Where a stage is the face of the theatre, it is actually the backstage that writes the script, pulls the strings, and runs the show. The third component, the audience, is mere spectator that has little to no influence on what happens on the stage. Yet at the same time it also happens to be the most important of the three constituents. Both the stage and backstage work together to put up a show to mainly influence and make an impression on the audience. Without the audience, the theatre has no meaning or effect.

Now what is it about terrorism that makes it theatrical? To begin with, the three essential components of theatre can also easily be compared with the three key players involved in the terrorism process. With the terrorist activity being treated as the drama or show that is being put up, some straightforward comparisons, at the outset, can be drawn between a theatrical backstage and those who orchestrate and plan the terrorist act. Just as the theatrical backstage is responsible for what happens on the stage and how the overall act is played out, similarly a terrorist backstage calls all the shots and determines how the drama on stage should unfold.

The direct victims of the attack can accordingly be compared with the actors or performers on the theatrical stage. At the outset, there is, however, one very important

difference in this particular comparison. Where the actors on the theatrical stage are fully willing collaborators, the performers in the terrorist drama are reluctant participants that are forced against their wishes to play out a role predetermined for them by the terrorist backstage. Nevertheless, the manner in which the actors behave on the two stages is strikingly similar, insofar as their actions are directed by a backstage and their performance is meant to influence an audience. Moreover, just as the real identity of the actors on the theatrical stage is unimportant or even irrelevant and what matters instead is what the actors depict, signify and represent; terrorism similarly is also not really concerned with the individual identity of its forced actors or performers but with the broader community or identity they represent.

Lastly, and also most importantly, a direct and obvious comparison can be made between a terrorist target audience and a theatrical audience. The show in both cases is essentially being put together to influence an audience. Without the audience and the attention, the act in both instances becomes somewhat meaningless and inconsequential. Moreover, just as most theatrical plays are primarily designed to appeal to certain audiences, terrorist activities are also aimed at attracting the attention of some specific target audiences. What is different perhaps is that terrorism as opposed to theatre does not interact with a live physical audience and instead communicates with its audience indirectly, a point that will become clear later in the discussion.

These straightforward similarities between terrorism and theatre in many ways resonate almost intuitively with our common perception of terrorist attacks and particularly help explain why the theatrical attribute of terrorism has acquired somewhat of a proverbial status. This simple comparison however is not entirely sufficient for formal academic assessment and qualification. There must be more to the theatrical attribute that explains the prevalent scholarly support and interest it receives. To put it differently, in order for the theatrical attribute to justify its academic patronage, it must also incorporate some key features that are typically deemed characteristic of terrorism by the terrorism scholarship.

The above comparison has clearly shown that a number of parallels can indeed be drawn between terrorism and theatre. From the many highlighted similarities, the most striking perhaps is the way in which the terrorist attacks are primarily aimed at

attracting the attention of some specific audience. In fact, for Jenkins and most other academics, the theatrical comparison is largely drawn from terrorism's propensity to attract the attention of some target audience through some spectacular acts of violence (See e.g. Wilkinson, 2001; Weimann, 2008). The theatre of terrorism then, at least from an academic standpoint, is essentially about communicating a message through psychologically influencing an audience. The theatrical attribute therefore effectively incorporates two of terrorism's most noteworthy characteristics: its psychological impact and communicative nature.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, the theatrical understanding of terrorism can primarily be interpreted in terms of its proclivity to (psychologically) influence some target audience beyond its immediate or direct victims. This means that the drama of terrorism generally plays out with the actors or direct victims carefully chosen to resonate with some broader target audience. It is worth remembering here that even though the individual identity of the actors or direct victims is somewhat unimportant, their selection for communicative or message generation purposes, is never entirely random or indiscriminate.<sup>41</sup> The direct victims of terrorist violence will always boast certain characteristics that the real or the intended target identifies with. It is this identification with the direct victims that explains the appeal of the terrorist drama to its intended audience.

Terrorism, in a strictly theatrical sense, is therefore a communicative form of violence where the direct victims are merely used to send a message to some intended target audience. It is owing to this communicative nature of terrorist violence that Hoffman and McCormick 'define terrorism as a signaling game in which terrorist attacks are used to communicate a group's character and objectives to a set of target audiences' (2004: 243). Similarly, Wilkinson also observes this communicative behavior, which he believes is intrinsic to all terroristic violence. He points out that 'terrorism by its nature is a psychological weapon which depends upon communicating a threat to a wider society' (1977: 2001). It is in fact this centrality of communication that allows terrorism to be represented as theatre, as Michael Stohl notes, 'Political terrorism as

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<sup>40</sup> The psychological impact is on the audience terrorism seeks to influence and the communication is through the stage act, which normally involves some form of violence or its threat. Both these characteristics as discussed already enjoy significant popularity in the terrorism discourse.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion on the indiscriminate and random nature of terrorist violence.



communicatively constituted violence may also be presented as theatre: the world is the stage for the dramatic ingredients of violence, death, intimidation and fear (2008: 8).<sup>42</sup>

Now communication of any kind cannot function without some form of medium or channel of interaction with the subject of attention. Terrorism in this respect is also no exception. For its communication, terrorism relies almost entirely on tools provided by modern means of communication- mass media in particular. Media is a blanket term that encompasses all foremost means of communication. As Wilkinson notes, 'Media is a generic term meaning all the methods or channels of information and entertainment' (1997: 51). Although an analysis of the relationship between terrorism and media is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is still important to acknowledge the role that print and electronic media play in setting the stage on which the drama of terrorism unfolds. As without this stage, not only will terrorism fail to communicate its message to its target audience, but its theatrical credentials will also become highly questionable.<sup>43</sup>

The relationship between media and terrorism has been a subject of great interest and has attracted the attention of leading scholars in the field of political violence and terrorism studies (See e.g. Laqueur, 1977; Snyder, 1978; Weimann, 1983; Wilkinson, 2001). This interest in part can be attributed to the advancement in technology particularly in the field of mass communication that has significantly facilitated global connectivity through disseminating news and information almost instantaneously to just about anywhere in the world, thereby rendering all distances, at least in terms of communication, somewhat redundant. With distances no longer an obstacle for communication, a message can potentially be generated for any audience at any time.

Furthermore, the importance of the relationship between media and terrorism also owes to the nature of terrorist violence, which due to its communicative character is

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<sup>42</sup> The importance of the communicative nature, however, does not mean that any of the other attributes of terrorism, such as generation of fear or non-combatant targeting are in any way compromised. The message is generally communicated through generation of fear and targeting of non-combatants.

<sup>43</sup> It is important to also point out here that the relationship between terrorism and media is believed to be somewhat symbiotic as the media also benefits from the sensational and eye-catching news that terrorist attacks typically generate (See e.g. Wilkinson, 2001).

believed to be significantly reliant on tools provided by modern means of communication. As Jeffery Ross argues, ‘Terrorists use the media as a tool to gain increased coverage and communicate their message’ (2007: 221). Ross further suggests that ‘The relationship between terrorists and the news media will not subside, and in many respects, that interconnectivity will increase in years to come’ (Ibid).<sup>44</sup>

Thus, with the communicative nature of terrorism facilitated by advancements in the field of mass communication, the importance accorded to media is certainly not surprising. As Philip Schlesinger pithily observes, ‘In a perspective which sees political violence as unambiguously effective drama it is not surprising that media is accorded such importance’ (1981: 86). The ubiquitous presence of media coupled with the communicative nature of terrorist violence, for the most part therefore, explains not only the importance but also the attention the relationship receives. The importance of the communicative nature of terrorism and its subsequent reliance on media to achieve this end necessitates a small revision of terrorism’s theatrical understanding.

As pointed out earlier, a theatre comprises of three essential components: a stage, backstage, and a live audience. While all these three elements are visibly discernible in terrorism as well, what is different perhaps is that terrorism, unlike theatre, does not

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<sup>44</sup> It is important to point out that the relationship between terrorism and media appears somewhat problematic when one takes a form of government into consideration. This is because relationship between terrorism and media is typically observed only in the context of western liberal democracies or to a limited extend in countries that permit some form of freedom of speech and expression. The importance given to the relationship between terrorism and media in a democratic country, particularly by the academic community, is perhaps most evident in Wilkinson’s assertion that ‘When one says “terrorism” in a democratic society, one also says “media”’ (177: 2001).

The reason why this logic is not extended to undemocratic countries is because various dictatorial and authoritarian regimes typically maintain a strict control over media and flow of information, frequently censoring and repressing news believed to be problematic for the regime. While it is true that media functions somewhat differently in non-democratic countries, especially as it fails to provide a communicative platform to various insurrectional or dissenting groups, what is important to understand is that it can still provide an effective platform for state terrorism. Moreover, since global media transcends all borders, it is also not possible for any state to censor all information. Discussions on terrorism and media and especially how the former uses the latter to its advantage should therefore not be restricted to only democracies.

have a live physical audience with which it can interact directly. Instead, it relies on tools provided by media to communicate indirectly. Without media, terrorism will have no effective medium to communicate with its target audience, and without communication, all terroristic violence essentially runs the risk of not only being ineffective but also meaningless. Given this important role that media plays, the theatrical understanding of terrorism can be said to incorporate not three but in fact four essential elements: the terrorist actor, the terrorist act (or its threat), an audience, and a medium to communicate (or simply media).

Terrorism's reliance on media as its foremost or perhaps even only communicative medium entails that the message it is trying to communicate will be perceived through not only the physical act but also through how media represents it. In this respect, terrorism happens to be somewhat different from theatre. Where a theatrical backstage not only controls the performance of the stage actors but also determines the message they are trying to communicate; a terrorist backstage (especially in the case of non-state actors) only manages the performance of the actors and has little to no control over media that represents or transmits this performance and communicates the terrorist message. The terrorist backstage is therefore often at the mercy of media when it comes to representation and portrayal of not only their actions but also their intended message.

Although it can reasonably be argued that the mere reporting of the act in itself is often the intended message of the terrorist backstage, especially when the intention is to generate fear and panic. However, the manner in which an attack is reported and how much attention it receives and whether or not it even gets reported at all, is something that is ultimately at the discretion of the media. Hence, mass media does play a very central role in terrorist communication and is, as a result, an integral part of its overall theatrical edifice. The question of whether, how often and in what manner media represents and frames the message and actions of terrorist backstage is open to debate and contestation, and certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. What is important, however, is the undeniably significant role of media in the entire terrorist communication process.

As noted earlier in the discussion, the theatrical attribute of terrorism enjoys widespread popularity and recognition. So much so that many academics consider it

to be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of terrorism. Laqueur, for instance, noted the significance of the theatrical attribute of terrorism nearly four decades ago by pointing out that the terrorist act on its own amounts to very little and what matters instead is the attention it generates. He believes that this realization has especially become widespread among terrorist actors in the wake of advancement in the means of communications. Laqueur particularly acknowledges the role media plays in this terrorist formative thinking. In his own words, 'Terrorists have learned that the media are of paramount importance in their campaigns, that the terrorist act by itself is next to nothing, whereas publicity is all' (1977: 223). Similarly, Gabriel Weimann also acknowledges the importance of the theatrical dimension of terrorism and goes on to utilize the 'theatre-of-terror' approach to 'examine modern terrorism as an attempt to communicate message through the use of orchestrated violence' (2008: 69).

Fletcher is among those academics that not only see the theatrical attribute as the most outstanding but also the least disputed of terrorism's characteristics. In his attempt to conceptualize terrorism, Fletcher identifies eight different factors that have a bearing on terrorism. He concludes that none of these variables particularly help create a universal definition or understanding of terrorism, as any proposed definition would always produce counter examples. This, he believes is because 'not all the factors apply all the time' (2006: 910-911). However, he points out that there is one attribute that appears to apply every time and therefore comes closest to being an essential characteristic of terrorism. This unique factor is the element of theatre and Fletcher finds it hard to imagine a terrorist attack without 'a desire to draw public attention to the event' (p. 911).

It is perhaps true that Fletcher and many other academics normally tend to have somewhat of a narrow understanding of the theatrical attribute, generally believing it to be a mere spectacular act of violence that draws public attention. However, what becomes clearer on closer inspection is that this perception, in spite of never fully realizing the various facets of the attribute, is fairly consistent with the logic discerned above.

Most importantly perhaps, the academic assertion that the theatre of terrorism essentially involves- some spectacular act of violence that draws public attention- is able to effectively incorporate the four essential components of the theatrical attribute.

Whilst it seemingly focuses on only two components: the act and the audience, it indirectly also encompasses the other two components of actor and media. This is because an act can never occur in a vacuum and will always implicate an actor, directly or indirectly. Similarly, the attention of the audience can also only ever be drawn through some form of medium of interaction or communication, a role that in the modern world is largely performed by media.

Although it is important that the academic understanding is overall consistent with the logic discerned above, which clearly goes on to show that the academic perception of the theatrical attribute is not completely devoid of intellectual and analytical rigor, what is more important however is to acknowledge the popularity and shared understanding of the theatrical attribute in the academic community.

This is because the prevalent view of the theatrical attribute, unlike other attributes of terrorism, has never really been contested and is generally shared by academics of all dispositions. Hence, where other attributes of terrorism, like generation of fear, categorization of victims, indiscriminate or random, deliberate or accidental etc., are all fundamentally contested, the meaning and understanding of what the theatrical attribute entails has never really been challenged. This is crucially advantageous as it essentially means that the theatrical attribute can be treated as self-explanatory or simply taken at face value without any qualms.

Of course from a strictly empirical and diagnostic standpoint, categorization of the theatrical attribute as a mere spectacular act of violence that draws public attention does not appear to be a very helpful distinction. As what makes a particular act spectacular and how and when it is able to draw public attention is understandably very difficult to measure and quantify. Thus, given the nature of such qualification, if not the meaning of the attribute itself, its application at least will always be open to debate and contestation. Nevertheless, regardless of its subjective application or any quantitative considerations, the fact remains that there exists, to a large extent, an objective academic consensus on what the theatrical attribute broadly represents. And for that reason alone, it is important that any representation or conceptualization of the attribute also incorporates its prevalent and dominant perception.

Ideally any formal understanding or conceptualization of the theatrical attribute should incorporate not only its core components but also account for its virtually

undisputed inference. Understandably however it is not possible to account for every small intricacy and some minor aspects, especially those related to the core components, will subsequently have to be overlooked or treated as trivialities. Nevertheless, where such subtleties to an extent can or will have to be compromised, it is important still to remain particularly sensitive to the overwhelming academic consensus regarding the theatrical attribute, so as to not undermine the attribute's remarkable distinctiveness.<sup>45</sup> Otherwise, any conception will be of little avail, as any meaning discerned thereof would be lost on an audience that understands the attribute differently.

Our understanding of the theatrical attribute, as of necessity, should therefore aim to incorporate features that reflect academic patronage. As this discussion has shown, the three most outstanding features that epitomize academic sentiments or characterize academic understanding of the theatrical attribute are: the communicative nature of terrorism, drawing attention of some target audience, and the role of media in facilitating the entire process. Conveniently enough, all these three features can also effectively be expressed or simply summarized by the term 'publicity'.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines publicity as 'something that draws the attention of the public'.<sup>46</sup> The Oxford English dictionary, on the other hand, defines publicity as 'notice or attention given to someone or something by the media'.<sup>47</sup> With one stressing the importance of drawing attention and the other specifically highlighting the role played by media, both the two definitions clearly also gesture towards the communicative nature of the term publicity- thus, in the process, effectively incorporating all three features that characterize the academic understanding of the theatre of terrorism.

The dictionary definitions therefore clearly demonstrate that the term publicity, as commonly understood, can succinctly sum up the most outstanding features of the theatrical attribute. In fact, it will not be an exaggeration to suggest that publicity is

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<sup>45</sup> Distinctiveness in the sense that, as opposed to all other attributes of terrorism, the meaning and general interpretation of the theatrical attribute has never really been questioned or challenged.

<sup>46</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/publicity>. Accessed on: March 29, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/publicity>. Accessed on March 29, 2016.

one word that accurately captures the essence and best articulates and expresses the theatre of terrorism. It is for this reason that the theatrical attribute from here on will primarily be perceived in terms of publicity.

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Having discussed the theatrical attribute in detail, what it fundamentally entails and how it is commonly and popularly perceived, we can now move to the central question of whether or not it is exclusive to only non-state actors. The analysis of the theatrical attribute hitherto, owing to the common inference of the term terrorism, may have come across as entirely non-state centric. On closer inspection it becomes evident that the analysis is but largely independent of the actor and does not presuppose the actor to be non-state.<sup>48</sup> The same however cannot be said of the academic treatment of the theatrical attribute, which is typically restricted to only non-state actors. The question that arises here is whether publicity is characteristic of non-state actors only. If so, then given that it is the essence of the theatrical attribute, the logic of theatre can never reasonably be extended to state actors.

Earlier the theatrical attribute of terrorism was discerned by means of its four key components: the terrorist actor, the terrorist act (or its threat), an audience, and a medium to communicate (or simply media). While the first two of these core components are clearly independent of the actor (provided of course one does not start off with the assumption that terrorism is a non-state activity), the latter two however are not so easily applicable to states and are generally reserved for only non-state actors.

Arguably, it is often difficult to identify the intended audience when it comes to actions committed by states. This is because a state characteristically neither identifies its target audience nor vociferously takes responsibility for its actions in the manner a non-state actor does. Even though states can be equally vocal about their rivals and adversaries and denounce them publicly, but a frequent failure on their part to openly

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<sup>48</sup> There are clearly some unanswered questions about terrorist message communication and role of media, which if not restricted at least appear to apply somewhat differently to state and non-state actors. This will however become clearer as the discussion progresses.

declare hostilities and take responsibility for their violent actions sets them apart and renders it significantly difficult to implicate them. As a result of this, determining a state's involvement and identifying its target audience is often a matter of speculation and guesswork.

Similarly, with regard to the medium of communication or simply media, a state owing to its privileged power position is able to exert control or influence over the media apparatus and can either censor its involvement or simply hold someone else responsible for its violent actions. Thus Media, which is otherwise believed to be the cornerstone of terrorist communication process, fails to perform its normal or expected role as a state tries to conceal or disavow its actions through manipulating, controlling, or directing it.

In comparison, a non-state actor continually and repeatedly not only takes responsibility for its actions but also clearly identifies its target audience. With regards to media, unlike state actors, non-state actors are normally never in a privileged power position to assert any kind of influence or control over it. Moreover, what specifically sets them apart is that far from shying away from their involvement they customarily not only take direct responsibility for their actions but also want the media to attribute the violence to them. There thus appears to be a marked difference between state and non-state actors when it comes to the theatrical components of audience and media. As Peter Waldmann notes, 'while terrorism relies strongly on large-scale media attention, state terror merely requires a whispering campaign (quoted in Schwenkenbecher, 2012: 26).

It is important to remember here that the components of audience and media, other than signifying the communicative nature of terrorism, collectively also give rise to the element of publicity, which was earlier described as the essence of the theatrical attribute. Now if states typically do not specify their target audience, claim no responsibility for their violent actions, and also desire no media attention, then they clearly do not invoke the element of publicity, at least not in the manner the term is commonly and popularly perceived.

Thus far it has been shown that where the non-state actors tend to actively pursue publicity, state actors largely tend to shy away from it- as an actor clearly cannot be said to seek publicity if it fails to categorically identify its target audience and



purposely avoids media attention. The argument therefore goes that if states neither seek nor evoke publicity then there can be no theatrical dimension to their violence. Furthermore, if we hold that the theatrical attribute is fundamental to terrorism then this would also go on to suggest that a state, in effect, cannot practice terrorism.

The question that arises here is why a state does not seek publicity the way a non-state actor normally does? Although there is no straightforward answer to this question, there are still two interrelated factors that to a large extent explain why states appear to behave somewhat differently. The first of these factors is rooted in the utilitarian debate and questions the overall efficacy of publicity, especially in relation to states. The second factor is tied to the nature of the state itself, which owing to its privileged power position in the society, is expected to behave different from non-state actors.

Having already discussed the utilitarian argument, we know that terrorism is anything but a futile activity. Moreover, in strictly utilitarian terms it was also concluded that states stand to gain significantly more from terrorism than non-state actors. This is because states characteristically have a range of violent alternatives at their disposal and can employ a form of violence that best corresponds to their needs. In comparison, non-state actors, often due to complete lack of violent alternatives, could be forced to resort to terrorism even if it is clearly not in their best interest. Hence, on the face of it, the utilitarian argument appears to suggest that states may in fact benefit more from utilizing terrorism than non-state actors.

If the utilitarian argument permits states to practice terrorism as it does, then how can it also explain why a state would not seek publicity? As pointed out earlier, utilitarian considerations, due to a lack of consensus on the definition of terrorism, are mostly restricted to only the chances of success of an actor's objectives or simply the intent of the actors in terms of their stated goals and motives. Moreover, with focus on the success or failure of objectives alone, they also tend to be largely actor neutral or can at least be treated as such. However, not all utilitarian considerations or objections are generic and some are driven specifically by certain features deemed to be characteristic of terrorism.

In relation to terrorism there are therefore two types of utilitarian considerations: intent centric and nature centric. Where the former engages with terrorism only outwardly (focusing primarily on the chances of success of an actor's stated

objectives) the latter is concerned more with specific aspects of the nature of terrorist violence. Since utilitarian considerations regarding terrorism are generally interpreted in terms the chances of success of an actor's stated objectives, most academics engage with the problem only outwardly. Having already dismissed the intent centric utilitarian objections to state's use of terrorism, we will now turn our attention to nature centric considerations regarding terrorism.

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Nature centric considerations tend to focus on certain characteristics that are deemed essential to terrorism's formal makeup. Although such utilitarian considerations can be diverse and wide-ranging (emphasizing one or the other attribute to highlight either terrorism's usefulness or futility), the most prominent perhaps and especially relevant to our discussion are considerations regarding the element of publicity. In order to understand the function and utility of publicity, we must first briefly revisit the notion that terrorism, in terms of resources required, is the least demanding form of violence.

Earlier it was pointed out that one of the reasons why states are routinely exonerated is because of the tendency to see terrorism as essentially a weak actor strategy. This position is backed by the assertion that in comparison with other forms of violence terrorism requires minimal effort and resources. The low cost of terrorism supposedly makes it a particularly attractive choice for actors that lack resources to engage in any other form of violence. Where treating this as grounds for state exceptionalism has robustly been challenged and shown to be an inadequate qualification, the assertion itself that terrorism is the least demanding form of violence has not been contested.

Despite being least demanding we know that terrorism is still an effective mode of violence. This raises a set of two interrelated questions- what is it that makes terrorism low cost and more importantly perhaps, how can it still manage to stay effective? Conveniently enough, there happens to be just one answer to both these questions and it lies squarely with the psychological impact of terrorism. Understandably, psychological impact is not the sole province of terrorism, as violence of any kind, in one way or another, generally tends to have some form of psychological effect. However, where it is possible to imagine other forms of violence

without the psychological ingredient, there it is almost impossible to imagine an act of terrorism without some kind of psychological effect. It is because of this indispensable association that the psychological impact is believed to constitute the *raison d'être* of terrorist violence (See e.g. Merari, 1993; Wilkinson, 2001).

Having already discussed it earlier in detail, it will suffice to say here that the psychological impact of terrorism basically functions through influencing or at least affecting the psychology of an audience in some manner. Whether deliberate or not, terrorist attacks typically disturb an individual's sense of security through targeting certain mental vulnerabilities, which among other things subsequently lead to the generation of fear.<sup>49</sup> Due to this inherently mental process, terrorist violence in effect possesses the ability to exploit our deepest insecurities. As a result of this, the response or the effect terrorism produces is often not always rational or proportionate to the actual threat it otherwise poses. It is therefore even possible to trigger a disproportionate or irrational psychological response with not terrorist violence but in fact its mere threat, provided of course the threat is (or at least appears to be) credible.

Hence, what makes terrorism a low cost violent alternative is not some inscrutable physical prowess but instead its unrestrained and irrepressible psychological impact. Given that it is able to achieve this impact with just a credible threat further entails that terrorism does not even need the personnel and material strength to impress or impose. In other words, due to its psychological dimension the appeal of terrorism does not necessarily depend upon a visible show of power and physical strength and its success need not be measured in conventional military jargons. As Taylor and Horgan note that the success for terrorism is 'not measured through military objectives, but much more diffuse psychological objectives' (1999: 88).

Free from such conventional notions of success, terrorism instead need only maintain a façade of power and strength- enough just to communicate its credible threat. Some scholars, however, would argue here that in order to communicate a credible threat, terrorism would need to demonstrate its ability first (See e.g. Wellman, 1979;

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<sup>49</sup> Although due to the psychological nature of terrorist violence the precise manner in which an audience is affected will always remain somewhat elusive, we can however still conclude that a terrorist attack or its threat will result in an actual or perceived threat to an individual's social life, which subsequently would lead to generation of fear.

Crenshaw, 2011). Even if we accept this position, the cost of a single act of terrorist violence will still be insignificant when compared with the expenditure of other forms of regular and irregular warfare.

The ability to affect the psychology of individuals with minimum effort and resources gives terrorism a distinctive edge over other forms of violence. It is this cost-effective relative advantage that makes terrorism an attractive choice for furthering one's objectives. Owing to the influence and affect it is capable of exerting psychologically, terrorism is able to muster considerable social and political sway despite appearing inconsequential in any material or visible sense.

It is worth remembering here that the way the psychological impact works is through communication of a threat to the intended target audience. Without effective communication, terrorism will fail to psychologically influence its audience and will subsequently lose its relative advantage. Indeed, it is due to this overriding importance of communication that terrorism is largely regarded as a communicative form of violence (See e.g. Hoffman and McCormick, 2004). Now communication of any form, as pointed out earlier, always requires some medium of interaction. Terrorism in this respect is also no exception and for its communication relies almost entirely on tools provided by media.

Now media, whether print or electronic, characteristically charges for providing its communicative services, which would mean that if not the terrorist act then at least its communication could be a costly affair. However, when it comes to terrorism, the media normally never levies any charges against the perpetrators. This is because terrorist violence by virtue of its nature is newsworthy, sensational and more than capable of grabbing headlines. It helps raise viewership and subsequently offers indirect financial incentives to media, prompting the latter to render its communicative services free of charge. Such indirect financial rewards are particularly characteristic of our modern-day market oriented capitalist states.

In an age of consumerism, any activity that has the potential to draw public attention will be deemed commercially successful. In this vein, one activity in particular that never fails to draw attention is violence. Be it real or fictional, violence always manages to captivate an audience. And since the least common denominator for any terrorist activity is violence or its threat, the commercial value accredited to terrorism

as a result is hardly surprising. As Schmid pithily observes, ‘Violence, no matter what the cause, always draws the attention of people. The production of violence, whether in fictional action series or in terrorist campaigns, creates audiences which can then be exposed to sales’ (1992: 22). In a sense therefore, the media, far from charging for the services rendered, stands to gain significantly from terrorist violence. It exploits terrorism’s commercial faculty in order to foster its own ratings and profits. This is why Schmid believes that ‘For the media, terrorist news is good news in that it offers live drama and compelling pictures’ (Ibid).

Hence, what makes terrorism both low cost and effective is not just its ability to psychologically influence an audience with nothing more than a mere credible threat that undermines or affects an individual’s sense of security, but also the free medium of communication provided by media. Terrorism, therefore, is a cost-effective mode of violence, in not only its conduct but also its communication. We shall now see how this cost-effectiveness relates to publicity and if and how it is applicable to non-state actors only.

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At the outset, some noteworthy and interesting parallels can be drawn between publicity and the cost-effectiveness of terrorism. Publicity as concluded earlier is the art of drawing attention and getting noticed primarily with the help of media. Similarly, terrorism’s cost-effectiveness, measured in terms of its psychological influence, also manages to draw attention of the affected and the actor responsible (particularly in cases where the responsibility has either been taken or attributed to some actor) gets widely noticed and recognized.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the dependence of terrorist activity on media to not only propagate and disseminate its message but also promote and project its actions further affirms the link between publicity and cost-effectiveness of terrorism.

These parallels essentially go on to show that publicity in fact can be regarded as the tool that allows terrorism to function cost-effectively. With its ability to draw

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<sup>50</sup> Even if the activity has not been attributed to any actor, the issue of responsibility still becomes a matter of discussion, intrigue, and speculation.

attention and attribute credit through media, publicity provides terrorism not only the necessary cost-effective platform but also enables it to inflict its psychological impact, which allows terrorism to punch above its material and personnel capacity.

In utilitarian parlance, the role of publicity therefore is to provide a disproportionate social and political leverage to actors looking to bring about or prevent some change through violent means. In other words, publicity makes terrorism a valuable asset especially for weak actors as it conceals their weaknesses and allows them to exert more influence than what their size and strength would otherwise permit. This is particularly true for non-state actors that in terms of power in the society are often at a disadvantage and as a result turn to terrorism to make up for their shortcomings.

Now the objectives of any dissenting actor, in light of its cause or grievance, can broadly be broken down into awareness regarding the cause and resolution of the cause. Getting noticed or attracting the attention of some target audience to a group or its cause can be treated as a short-term objective, whereas the resolution of the group's overall cause can be regarded as its long-term or ultimate objective. Due to lack of resources, disgruntled and aggrieved non-state actors often struggle to not only get their grievances resolved but may even fail to get them noticed at all. However, owing to the provision of publicity, terrorism ensures that such grievances are at least noticed and brought to the attention of wider public, even if they are not permanently resolved. Terrorism, therefore, has a built-in provision to facilitate short-term success in terms of recognition and attention.

As discussed earlier, a large number of academics believe that terrorism mostly manages to achieve only some short-term or limited objectives. Since, the most common short-term objective of any non-state actor is to gain recognition and create awareness regarding its cause, the short-term benefits attributed to terrorism as a result are hardly surprising. Non-state actors vying for recognition and attention will at any rate opt for terrorism even though it does not guarantee overall success. There are three main reasons why non-state actors find this short-term goal particularly appealing.

Firstly, non-state actors, owing to their limited resources and disadvantageous power position in the society, are often not widely known and therefore their first and foremost objective is to gain recognition and create awareness regarding their plight.

Secondly, many non-state actors (given that they are rational) are at least presumptively aware of the unlikelihood of achieving their ultimate objectives with terrorism alone. Under such circumstances, recognition of some sort and drawing attention to an actor's cause (due to its almost guaranteed plausibility), alternatively become the pragmatic objective. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, even if terrorism is unable to solve the problem immediately or in the near foreseeable future, it is not entirely unreasonable for some non-state actors to expect that the acquired recognition and attention from terrorism, in one way or another, would still considerably help in laying down the crucial groundwork for the ultimate resolution of the problem in the long run. The way they see it, terrorism may not grant complete victory but it certainly offers a path to it.

Terrorism's inherent propensity to mainly offer only limited success often transforms ordinary conflicts into symbolic conflicts where ambitions of total or ultimate victory are often substituted with the desire to gain broader attention and recognition. The reason why such conflicts can be called symbolic is firstly because of the manner in which terrorism selects its direct victims, which as discussed in Chapter 2, can best be described as symbolic. Secondly, when an actor loses all prospects of achieving its ultimate objective yet still repeatedly targets or threatens to target these symbols that resonate with its target audience, the nature of the conflict as a result becomes more and more symbolic, incapable of winning anything more than attention and recognition.

This is of course not to say that non-state actors using terrorism inevitably lose all hope of accomplishing their ultimate goals, nor does this suggest that these short-term goals are trivial or unimportant. Clearly, recognition and attention are the vital first steps towards achieving complete victory. Instead, it only suggests that since the road to such a victory is long, arduous, and fairly uncertain, the easily attainable short-term objectives of recognition and attention either appear or inadvertently become the only objective of some non-state actors. As Richmond succinctly observes, 'If non-state and terrorist actors cannot win "real" war, they feel they might be able to win these symbolic conflicts' (2003: 299).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> It is important to point out here that being mostly successful in its short-term pursuits does not mean that terrorism is completely inconsequential in the long run. The social and political sway terrorism is

So far it has been shown that with the help of publicity terrorism is able to inflict its psychological impact, which enables it to punch well above its weight and exert significant influence with minimum effort and resources. This makes terrorism a highly cost-effective mode of violence that particularly attracts non-state actors looking for a violent alternative that corresponds to their abilities. However, given that publicity mainly enables terrorism to achieve the objective of recognition and attention means that the effectiveness of terrorism is often restricted to partial or limited success.

In other words, although publicity almost guarantees short-term success, any long-term or complete victory for terrorism is far less assured. This of course does not undermine the overall utility of terrorism, especially for many non-state actors that would struggle to even register otherwise. It does, however, mean that a failure to achieve long-term goals often reduces terrorist violence to a symbolic conflict concerned only with some short-term gains.

It has been pointed out earlier that there is no reason for states to not opt for terrorism simply because they have other violent options at their disposal. If anything, a choice of violent alternatives would entail that states, as apposed to non-state actors, could simply pick and choose a form of violence that best suits their needs. As long as terrorism is a cost-effective mode of violence, its utility and application should be independent of the actor, unless of course the advantage terrorism offers is either too trivial or insignificant to benefit states or its nature is such that only non-state actors could profit from it. As will become clear in the following discussion, both these two factors, to varying degrees help explain how the utility of terrorism plays out somewhat differently for state actors.

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Assisted by publicity, terrorism as we know mostly offers only short-term benefits in the form of recognition and attention. Where these benefits are crucial for non-state

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able to muster because of its psychological impact can have long-term effects on the society even if it fails to achieve its primary objective. The nature of symbolic terrorism will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter.



actors and in fact in some cases even prove to be vital for their survival, they appear to hold far little significance for states. A state actor typically possesses vast material and personnel resources and enjoys a privileged power position in the society, normally in the form of control over the government or ruling apparatus. It clearly therefore faces no qualms regarding its survival or recognition as the general public is fully aware of not only its presence but also its authority. A non-state actor, on the other hand, not only lacks such resources but is also customarily on the periphery of the prevailing power structures in the society, and as a result of this, the broader public may not even be aware of its existence least of all its power and ability.

In order to be taken seriously, non-state actors must therefore put themselves out there and demonstrate significant ability that captures the imagination of an otherwise inattentive audience. However, a disadvantaged power position coupled with a lack of any real ability means that they may instead have to project an illusion of strength and power, convincing enough to sway or at least influence popular perception. Terrorism, with its provision of publicity, allows them to accomplish just that. States, in comparison, with all their power and resources are always in the public eye and are generally taken very seriously. Hence, a state normally has nothing to prove in terms of its power and ability. The façade or illusion of power and influence that publicity provides is at least ostensibly of little avail to states.

The element of publicity thus appears to apply somewhat differently to state and non-state actors primarily due to the relative power positions of the two actors in the society. Where states in general boast a fair amount of publicity simply because they are at the centre of an existing power hierarchy, non-state actors due to being on the fringes of this prevailing power structure usually enjoy no such privilege.

It seems therefore that a state does not benefit from the most outstanding advantage terrorism offers (at least not in the manner a non-state actor does), as it does not need publicity to either exaggerate its ability or to draw attention to its actions out of fear that it may otherwise disappear from public consciousness. This is not to say that a state does not care for recognition and attention, but to point out that a state, by virtue of its nature and advantageous power position, already enjoys these privileges.

Terrorism, with its fairly uncertain long-term prospects only really guarantees short-term goals of recognition and attention and if states do not benefit from this because

their position in the society already grants these provisions, then there is no rational basis for them to opt for terrorism. Nevertheless, this seemingly convincing and straightforward assessment suffers from one obvious flaw. A state can only ever completely enjoy such provisions if it does not face any formidable challenge to its status and there is retention and continuation of uninterrupted status quo in its favor. The analysis above therefore does not take into consideration the fact that states may run the risk of losing their status or face or suspect such a challenge, in which case the privileges they enjoy can be seriously threatened or even undermined.

It is true that as opposed to non-state actors, a state actor by virtue of being in charge of the power apparatus will always enjoy a certain degree of publicity and command some level of authority no matter how serious of a threat or challenge it faces. However, in the event its authority is challenged, especially in the form of popular dissent, the manner in which it normally enjoys its privileges may come under threat, prompting it to resort to unconventional means, including but not limited to terrorism, as this discussion shall demonstrate.

When a state resorts to violence to quash a challenge to its authority, the prevailing view among many academics is that it would do so secretly and clandestinely, often disassociating itself from the violence in question (See e.g. Gibbs, 1989; Smith and Roberts, 2008). As discussed earlier, a state normally neither takes responsibility for its actions nor identifies its target audience, which gives the impression that states do not invoke the element of publicity at least not in the manner non-state actors do. It may indeed be the case that a state and non-state actor differ significantly when it comes to taking responsibility and categorically identifying their respective target audiences, but this does not necessarily mean that a state's actions are completely devoid of publicity.

It is not uncommon for a state to clearly identify and denounce its rivals, however, its failure to frequently declare open hostilities against them and take direct responsibility for its violent actions is what makes it particularly difficult to implicate states. The question to be asked here is why states would try to conceal their involvement and seemingly at least, evade publicity. The reason why states behave this way is mainly due to factors related to legality, legitimacy and international image, which have been discussed earlier. It will suffice to say here that states often

brazenly deny any responsibility because they do not want to provoke a reaction from other states in the form of international condemnation, sanctions or armed action. The international norms and regulations, in other words, compel states to distance themselves from their violence.

While this may be true, a denial on state's part does not repudiate its involvement entirely. A state may fail to take direct responsibility for its actions but there are ways in which it can be incriminated indirectly. For instance, given that a state is fairly vocal about its opponents and denounces them publically and if no other actor shares its hostile feelings nor takes responsibility for violence towards the target group then that leaves little doubt about its involvement.

Similarly, the scale and nature of the violence especially in terms of the weapons used could sometimes also indirectly point towards the state. The 2013 Ghouta chemical attacks in Syria is a case in point. Although the Syrian regime actively denied any involvement- the nature of weapons, the manner in which they were used, and the target attacked, all pointed towards Syrian state's involvement. Even though there is some disagreement, an overwhelming majority of scholars and a strong body of evidence, clearly incriminates the Assad regime (Blake and Mahmud, 2013: 248-249). What is important to realize here is that a failure to acknowledge does not completely absolve a state of its responsibility. Involvement of a state actor, in spite of its refusal is generally common knowledge and within the margins of reasonable doubt.

Since a state's proclamations due to international pressure often tend to be misleading, the various indirect ways in which it can be indicted cannot therefore be ignored. Even if a state does not denounce its opponents and also the weapons or means employed fail to establish its involvement, it still does not mean that a state is necessarily bereft of any responsibility. Other than the reasons discussed already, the victims or the intended target of violence offer some vital clues regarding the identity of the actor that can be particularly instructive. In fact, the recipients of state violence provide perhaps the strongest indication of state's responsibility.

Due to the international code of conduct that expects all state actors to behave in a certain way, a state's refusal to take responsibility for its actions is primarily intended for the broader international community or outside observers, as it does not want to be penalized for any unlawful violation. Nevertheless, it should not face such qualms

when it comes to taking responsibility before its target audience, as its target due to an inferior power position cannot impose similar penalties on it. In other words, a state may not own its actions outwardly due to fear of international repercussions but inwardly an absence of such a reaction should at least in principle allow it to be far less wary.

However, in the modern age of mass communication, such disclosure even to a select audience can prove to be fairly risky, as information especially such as this cannot be contained. For a state actor to divulge its identity to a target audience, it must therefore get some benefit that would outweigh the cost it will subsequently incur. Now the question is, what does a state stand to gain from revealing its responsibility to a select audience?

Rationally speaking, it makes little sense for any political actor to engage in violence anonymously. For if the identity of the perpetrator were in doubt then the violence would simply appear pointless and devoid of any content. It is indeed hard to imagine that an anonymous message of any kind will be taken seriously let alone communicate anything meaningful. In the same way, it will be very difficult to make any sense of violence if a target audience does not know who is responsible for it and where it is coming from. Violence, if unattributed, would subsequently appear to be inapposite and even irrational, capable of accomplishing little beyond fear and confusion.

It is perhaps fair to say that anonymity in violence can only lead to chaos, fear and disillusionment. Although it is true that sometimes the intention could well be to spread panic and fear alone, however, even in such cases the perpetrator would still want its target to know what or whom they should fear. Otherwise the target audience would never know what is expected of them and how and if they should behave any differently.

In the context of violence, anonymity and rationality therefore appear to be somewhat incompatible. Given that political violence of any kind is generally believed to be a rational activity, we can see how anonymity will be a problem for any political actor. In fact, it can reasonably be concluded that since anonymous violence mostly tends to be irrational, it can never for that reason be political. In other words, it will be very odd to even call violence political if the identity of the actor is not known.

If rationality and anonymity are truly incompatible when it comes violence, then political violence as of necessity would demand some form of ascription. Driven largely by some political motives or ambitions, political violence is never completely devoid of content and substance. Short of genocide, political violence typically has some message to communicate to its target audience. This message will however be lost to an audience if the perpetrator opts for anonymity. Simply put, political violence cannot occur in a vacuum and a responsibility whether directly or indirectly must be attributed to some actor.

Violence committed by a state actor to suppress any form of dissent or opposition is essentially political in nature. To say therefore that state violence tends to be anonymous is to suggest that it is irrational. Prevalent as they are, assertions such as these are wrong footed that must therefore be corrected. Admittedly, states frequently refuse to publically take responsibility for their actions due to external pressures and international norms of conduct. However, a refusal neither absolves a state of its responsibility nor does it suggest that a state cannot take credit for its violence in some indirect way. As long as states are rational actors and as long as they have some message to communicate, the violence they commit can never be completely anonymous.

Hence, where the norms of international conduct would force a state to disavow its actions, there the logic of rationality would demand that the target audience is fully aware of its involvement. A state would therefore want the responsibility to be attributed to it in a manner that allows it to evade international scrutiny on the one hand and effectively communicate a message to its target on the other. Although it may seem difficult to achieve and maintain a contradictory and conflicting façade such as this, however, it is made possible by a state's advantageous power position and the influence it can exercise over the medium of communication.

With the ability to exert significant influence over mass media, states in effect, can control, change, or alter representation of events in their favor. This monopoly over means of communication allows states to communicate with multiple audiences simultaneously, thereby creating a narrative that serves their dual purpose of publically denying and surreptitiously acknowledging their own actions. This is of course not to suggest that the international community is incapable of seeing beyond

the façade and is constantly fooled by the state's narrative. After all, a perpetrating state's control over media is usually restricted to its own territory or area of influence, whereas the global mass media, as we know, transcends all borders. Therefore, far from being deceived, the international community is for the most part aware of a state's involvement.

This raises the question that if the international community is able to see past the deception, then why would a perpetrating state even bother to contrive such elaborate narratives? Here it is worth remembering that the international community normally recognizes only state actors as the officially designated representative of a country. In order to implicate any one of them, the norms of international conduct would typically require either first-hand evidence or a formal acknowledgement by the concerned actor. Otherwise, an actor's involvement will become a matter of speculation and guesswork, which according to international rules is simply not enough ground to implicate a state actor. In other words, whenever the involvement of a state actor is even slightly questionable, the international community will be forced to grant it the benefit of doubt.

If speculation and intelligent guesses are not enough to implicate states, then in principle, a perpetrating state can get away without any penalty as long as its involvement remains ambiguous. This means that a state fearing international repercussions does not have to conceal its actions entirely, but instead just create reasonable doubt and uncertainty regarding its involvement. A state, therefore, need only publicly deny any involvement and cover its tracks so as to not leave any direct trail of evidence.

Such public denial and an absence of direct trail ensures that a state is not persecuted or penalized for its actions. It does not, however, mean that a state cannot be indirectly indicted or held responsible. The ambiguity, in fact, manages to leave significant room for a responsibility to be affixed to a state actor indirectly. It is this indirect indictment that undercuts not only the façade of anonymity but also shows how a target audience is made aware of state's responsibility. Thus, the narratives fashioned by the state are not there to completely absolve it of all responsibility but instead to create just enough doubt and suspicion to prevent the international community from taking any action against it. Given that a perpetrating state can only

communicate a message to its audience if the latter is aware of its involvement, we can also see how the ambiguity surrounding a state's responsibility plays to its advantage.

It is important to point out in the end that where the international system puts limits on state's conduct and expects every state to pay for transgression of its privileges, there it is also bound by its principle of non-intervention and every state's right to use violence within its own territory. This provision seriously hampers the ability of any outside actor to intervene in the internal affairs of another country. Subsequently, it limits the options of international community to mere condemnation or sanctions, which the perpetrating state may view as an acceptable price to pay for retaining the status quo in its favour.

Simply put, the international community, more often than not, is incapacitated by its own norms and practices. Understandably therefore attributing violence to states at the international stage will continue to demand an official and formal acknowledgement on part of the perpetrating state, at least for the foreseeable future. However, where an official sanction is necessary to satisfy states and other legal entities, no such pre-conditions should apply to the academic community. Unrestricted by such imperatives, scholars should therefore try to objectively determine the involvement of state actors irrespective of their contrary claims.

It is important to also note that states do not necessarily gainsay violence and their involvement is also not necessarily intended to be clandestine. In fact, a state often openly declares hostilities against its opponents and takes responsibility for its violent actions. It then sets out to legitimize and justify its actions usually through an elaborate and extensive publicity campaign. The opponents are mostly made out to be irrational and dangerous actors that threaten not only the state but also the very fabric of the society. And the state takes it upon itself to eradicate and root out this threat entirely. Thus, states do not always pursue their rivals clandestinely and often take direct responsibility for their actions, much like non-state actors.

Hence, the popular belief that state violence against its citizenry mostly tends to be clandestine is clearly therefore a superficial assumption that takes a state's denial at face value and fails to account for not only its indirect involvement but also how the target audience perceives a threat and the actor responsible for it. To say that states

are different from non-state actors because they never take responsibility for their actions is therefore a misplaced assumption. It is perhaps true that non-state actors claim responsibility for their actions almost without fail, whereas states tend to be far more discreet and guarded in accepting responsibility. The difference between the two however is of degree not kind.

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We know that terrorism, assisted by publicity, is mostly effective in only its short-term pursuits. What terrorism promises to deliver through publicity is the object of recognition and attention. This means that if an actor is reluctant to claim responsibility for its actions then terrorism will fail to perform its most effective function. Although it is true that by virtue of its nature violence of any kind is generally capable of drawing attention. However, drawing attention alone proves to be both ineffective and unsustainable in the long run as violence without attribution gradually edges towards irrationality. Moreover, violence that lacks recognition also fails to yield any publicity. This is because publicity itself is defined in terms of drawing attention of an audience and providing recognition of some sort.

Attribution of violence is therefore extremely important insofar as publicity is concerned. Questions were raised earlier whether state actors can generate publicity given that they tend to distance themselves from their violence. However, if responsibility, in one way or another, can be attributed to states (as this discussion has shown) then in principle their violent actions should also be able to generate publicity. Yet being able to generate publicity is not enough reason to resort to it, as a state must also stand to benefit from it. We already know that non-state actors benefit significantly from the publicity that terrorism offers. The question to be asked is: do state actors benefit from terrorist publicity just as non-state actors do?

As discussed already, a state owing to its privileged power position seemingly does not benefit from the advantage terrorism offers through publicity. Where publicity often provides a lifeline to various non-state actors in terms of recognition and attention, there a state typically enjoys these provisions simply by virtue of its relative power position in the society. Moreover, terrorist publicity appears to benefit only



weak non-state actors looking for a cost-effective violent alternative that conceals their weakness and provides them with a disproportionate social and political leverage. Due to their weak position especially in relation to states, non-state actors tend to rely on terrorist publicity to greatly exaggerate their ability and potential through creating an illusion of strength and power. Since a state actor normally possesses vast resources and has a range of violent alternatives at its disposal, therefore far from exaggerating, it normally does not even need to prove anything in terms of its power or ability. It appears therefore that a state would not benefit from employing terrorism.

With regard to state's innate ability to exercise publicity, it was concluded earlier that a state could only fully enjoy this provision if there is retention of status quo in its favor. If the status quo is compromised, then the manner in which a state exercises its privileges could be seriously undermined. This of course does not mean that a state will lose its privileges altogether, for as long as it is state, it will continue to exercise publicity and other provisions in one way or another. Nevertheless, a challenge or a threat to the status quo even if it is only perceived could prompt a state to utilize terrorism and benefit from it- often surprisingly in the same way as non-state actors.

It is indeed hard to imagine that a state could ever benefit from terrorism in the same manner as non-state actors. A state clearly enjoys an advantage in terms of power over both its subjects and any non-state competitors. In addition to this obvious advantage, its target audience is largely aware of its ability and potential as its capabilities are very real and tangible, which means that a state does not need an illusion of power and strength that terrorist publicity provides. While this may be true in ordinary circumstances, when faced with a challenge, whether real or imagined, a state may need more than just a physical display of its abilities.

Due to the tangible nature of its capabilities which are clearly visible to any and all audiences, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that there is no real need for a state to demonstrate its abilities even in times of crisis. However, even though a state's capability is fairly evident, its intent to use it is certainly not. In other words, where states may not need to exhibit their capabilities, there they may still be required to demonstrate their willingness to use this ability. This is because a multitude of reasons, ranging from international norms or pressure to some likely backlash from

within, could potentially hold a state back from using its capabilities. Since state's competitors and target audience are aware of these limitations, a credible demonstration of intent on part of the state can sometimes therefore be necessary.

The assumption that non-state actors as of necessity must demonstrate their ability while state actors need not, is therefore, somewhat superficial. It only considers the visible abilities of the two actors and does not take into account the intangible limitations that may prevent a state actor from utilizing its capabilities. Just as non-state actor's ability is not evident, a state's willingness to use its ability is also not evident. In order to benefit from terrorist publicity, where a non-state actor must demonstrate its ability, there a state must demonstrate its intentions to use its ability. The two actors are for that reason not very dissimilar in terms of publicizing their respective abilities. Both essentially aim to communicate a credible threat to their target audiences usually through a physical demonstration of their respective ability and intent.

Although this comparison goes on to show that state and non-state actors are not very different in terms of showing off or displaying their abilities, it does not in anyway suggest that a state also needs to exaggerate or overstate its ability. It is indeed true that unlike non-state actors, a large number of states do not need to create an illusion of power and strength. This does not however mean that they still cannot benefit from the exaggeration that terrorist publicity provides. Exaggeration being an important facet of publicity<sup>52</sup> comes in all shapes and sizes and should therefore not be associated with illusion of power and strength alone.

Since a resort to terrorism is essentially due to its cost-effectiveness, exaggerations as opposed to actual costly actions are understandably a logical substitute. As we know, the primary reason why terrorism is cost-effective is because it need only create a psychological impact through some credible threat. Indeed, if an actor can manage to inflict considerable psychological impact with as little as threat, then there is no need to employ or risk precious resources even if one has them in abundance.

Now given that this threat must be convincing enough to be able to replace tangible costs, it needs to first and foremost conceal all visible weaknesses of the perpetrating

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<sup>52</sup> Publicity, be it of any kind, typically incorporates some form of exaggeration.

actor. Otherwise, the actor will not be taken seriously and the credibility of its threat will be seriously compromised. Concealing a weakness or simply lying about one's capability naturally involves a fair amount of overplay and exaggeration and is simply not possible without it.

Substituting resources with credible threats therefore often requires a fair dose of exaggeration. Both state and non-state actors have some obvious shortcomings, which if unchecked would play to their disadvantage and undermine the intensity and efficacy of their otherwise credible threat. It becomes somewhat necessary for them to exaggerate some aspects of their capability so as to effectively mask their respective weaknesses. Thus where a non-state actor must accentuate its ability, there a state actor will have to exaggerate its willingness to use its ability.

This does not however mean that state and non-state actors come with their own respective set of exaggerations. On the contrary, there is in fact significant overlap and both actors often tend to exaggerate in the same way. For instance, the frequent terrorist exaggerations regarding the consequences that would ensue if a target audience fails to comply with the demands of the perpetrator are largely actor neutral and can equally be employed by both state and non-state actors.

It may appear as if most terrorist exaggerations, in one way or another, correspond to the respective abilities of the actors, yet however this is not necessarily the case always. An important dimension of terrorist publicity is to demonize and discredit one's opponents. It is fairly common for terrorist actors to be overly critical of their opponents and exaggerate their actions. Although the list of such exaggerated criticisms can be long and tedious, it will suffice to say here that they have little, if at all anything, to do with the ability of the criticizing actor.

Exaggerations are multifaceted that extend beyond the abilities of the actor and cover all aspects of terrorist violence. They are actor neutral and cannot be associated with non-state actors only. A state's exaggeration of its material and personnel ability can therefore never be ruled out of hand. It could also utilize terrorist publicity to create an illusion of power and strength just as non-state actors do.

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So far throughout this discussion it has been pointed out that a state does not need such an illusion as it enjoys a clear and fairly visible control over vast resources. This, much like other privileges enjoyed by a state, however only holds true as long as a status quo favoring the state is in place. A challenge or a threat to the status quo could potentially trigger a significant loss of power and authority, which could seriously undermine the trust and confidence in a state's ability.

A state's control over the power apparatus and the privileges it enjoys thereof, are in large part due to its abilities that are acknowledged and respected by its subjects. Consequently, in the event there is a challenge to a state's authority, it will be required to demonstrate its ability to its subjects to show that it still has the necessary power to demand their loyalty and command authority over them. Under such circumstances, the notion that a state has nothing to prove in terms of its ability becomes highly questionable.

A demonstration of ability would normally depend upon the severity of the challenge to the status quo. This means the greater the challenge the greater will there be a need for a state to demonstrate its ability and vice versa. Thus, while small and trivial challenges can be ignored, greater and serious challenges will require a corresponding level of demonstrative response. This is necessary to not only offset the opposition but also to reassert a state's authority over its subjects, which can become uncertain if seriously challenged.

The problem for some states, however, is that showing off abilities especially in the wake of some formidable challenge is not always a straightforward affair, as a state simply may not have the necessary ability to do so. This is especially true for states that are weak and can be easily offset by a challenge. Faced with the seemingly impossible task of demonstrating some non-existent ability, states will be hard-pressed to look for some inexpensive cover up that bypasses the need for actual or physical demonstration of power.

Terrorism, with all its benefits outlined so far, clearly provide states with just such a cover up. Through publicity, terrorism offers a cost-effective substitute that not only allows an actor to punch above its weight with minimum effort and resources but also manages to conceal its weaknesses. The terrorist publicity, in effect, enables a state to compensate its inability with exaggerated rhetoric, propaganda and threats, thereby

creating a façade of power and strength. Hence, the illusion of strength and power that grants a disproportionate social and political advantage to non-state actors provides similar benefits to weak states that lack sufficient resources and struggle to keep the status quo in their favor. The dictatorial regime of Gaddafi in Libya is an important case in point.

In early 2011, just as the Arab spring gained momentum in the broader Middle East, the Libyan state under Gaddafi faced a formidable challenge in the form of popular uprising. With the relatively peaceful fall of the dictatorial regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and strong international support for a democratic transition in the Middle East, dissent against Gaddafi (both internally and internationally) started growing at a phenomenal rate (Chorin, 2012: 191). Denouncing not only the uprising but also the international support for it, the Gaddafi regime soon embarked on a brutal crackdown of all opposition and dissent. Ultimately, what started as a peaceful revolution soon turned into a violent armed struggle with both sides refusing to give in (Cronogue, 2013: 137).

Fearing a human catastrophe as the Libyan state's onslaught against its citizens intensified, the international community led by US, Britain and France, responded by targeting the military capability of the state (Garwood-Gowers, 594: 2013). With both its citizens and the international community in strict opposition, the military and personnel ability of the state rapidly declined. Feeling cornered and isolated, the Gaddafi regime was soon fighting for survival as it desperately tried to cling on to power and keep the status quo in its favor. In the face of serious internal and external challenges, the state's ability to govern the country was becoming increasingly questionable.

In order to regain the respect and confidence of its citizenry and also justify its hold over the power apparatus, the regime had little choice but to demonstrate its ability. However, crumbling under the weight of international sanctions, air strikes and a powerful internal rebellion, the state's physical ability had largely been compromised. Yet defiant and unrelenting, the Libyan state sought alternate means to work around its handicap.

The Gaddafi regime, in spite of all its weaknesses, still maintained de facto control over the state and the power apparatus, which not only gave it control over the state

media but as its proclamations and edicts carried an official sanction, it also enjoyed an easy and direct access to all major media outlets across the globe. This unrestricted access to media enabled the state to rebuff all counterclaims that the regime was losing the support of general public and had greatly been weakened by the rebellion. Instead, the state used media to publicize and propagate its own version of events and reality. It presented the uprising as insignificant and peripheral that did not represent the popular sentiments and urged both its own populace and the international community to reject it completely. During the revolution, Gaddafi infamously referred to the rebels as mere rats and cockroaches that presented no real challenge to the state and vowed to destroy them all (Cronogue, 2013: 138).

By downplaying the threat posed by the uprising, the regime at the same time also dismissed its ability to challenge the state in any meaningful way. In addition to making light of the rebellion, the regime was also careful not to show any weakness or wavering in its own ability and resolve to deal with the crisis. It utilized publicity to not only trivialize the rebellion but also greatly exaggerate and even lie about its own ability and support base. Through use of propaganda, rhetoric, and violence, the Gaddafi regime attempted to create an illusion of power and strength to compensate for its lost ability and credibility.

All such undertakings eventually proved to be unsuccessful as the rebels assisted by coalition air strikes and weaponry, soon made serious headway right into the heart of regime stronghold until the state was eventually defeated and a new status quo emerged in its place. Although the state's use of illusion and exaggeration in this particular instance proved to be largely unsuccessful, it does not mean that this is always the case necessarily. There are numerous other instances where it actually proved to be fairly effective. For instance, amid constant regional and international challenges, Saddam Husain's regime successfully managed to create and project an illusion of power and strength to not only its subjects but also the wider global audience for several decades. It was not until Saddam was defeated that the façade of his propaganda and rhetoric was finally uncovered.

Ultimately, whether or not terrorism was utilized by the Gaddafi or Saddam regime is beside the point here. The purpose of these examples was just to show that a state could easily find itself in a position where it could benefit from the illusion of power

and strength that terrorist publicity readily provides. And as long as a state can find itself in a position where it must exaggerate and overstate its ability to retain a lost or challenged status quo, it stands to benefit from terrorist publicity in precisely the same manner as non-state actors.

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Over the course of this discussion it has been shown that a state's violent actions, even when it claims otherwise, are never completely devoid of responsibility and that a state can benefit significantly from terrorist publicity whenever the status quo in its favor is challenged. In light of these observations, the discussion has sought to challenge the assertion that only non-state actors have a theatrical dimension to their violence. For if states take responsibility for their actions and also stand to benefit from the recognition and attention that terrorist publicity provides then the theatrical attribute of terrorism is equally applicable to them as well. However, where this analysis shows that both state and non-state actors benefit from terrorist publicity and subsequently have a theatrical dimension to their violence, there it also gestures towards an important difference between the two.

Terrorism as we know mainly offers only limited or partial success and is far less enduring in its long-term pursuits. Sole reliance on terrorism alone can therefore inadvertently render some conflicts purely symbolic as an unrealistic desire for total victory is slowly replaced with the only realizable objectives of recognition and attention. This means that an unrelenting actor with no real prospects of winning is gradually consumed by the short-term benefits it is guaranteed through terrorism. While it is true that terrorism offers the same incentives to both state and non-state actors, it is only the latter's terrorism that can turn symbolic. There are three factors in particular that help establish the accuracy of this claim.

Firstly, as terrorism is fundamentally political, the ultimate objective of all practicing actors therefore ranges from control, share, or some form of sway over the power apparatus. It is only when an actor completely fails to achieve any of these substantial objectives and loses all its power privileges that it tends to get consumed by the superficial short-term benefits that terrorism offers. Given that only non-state actors

can completely fail to achieve their objectives and lose all power privileges (if they had any), only their violence can therefore potentially turn symbolic. This is not to say that a state can never fail entirely or lose all its power privileges. Instead, it merely gestures towards the nature of the state, which by definition must enjoy certain basic privileges and command some form of control over the power apparatus. For if a state fails entirely and loses all its power privileges, then it also ceases to be a state. Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Libya under Gaddafi are important examples in this regard.

Secondly, an actor would exclusively rely on terrorism only if it has no other violent alternatives available. Since it is the non-state actors that often lack violent alternatives, therefore only they can be forced to rely on terrorism alone. Sole reliance coupled with a failure to achieve primary objectives, often in the long run transforms the nature of the conflict to serve only the ends that terrorism furnishes, which subsequently reduces the non-state struggle to a mere symbolic conflict capable of accomplishing little more than terrorist violence.

States on the other hand, never have to rely on terrorism entirely. With a range of violent alternatives at their disposal, they can simply choose a form of violence that best suits their needs, as alternating between different forms violence optimizes their chances of achieving their ultimate objective. In other words, states can employ terrorism when it can best take advantage of its benefits and switch to other forms of violence when it falls short. The conflict therefore can never turn symbolic, as a state will always have other means to resort to.

Thirdly, from a strictly utilitarian standpoint, many non-state actors (due to being on the fringes of power hierarchy) rely on terrorism to provide them with attention and recognition, without which they may not even be able to register otherwise. Many of them will therefore persist with terrorism even if they ultimately realize the futility of such an undertaking in the long run. In fact, for some non-state actors, mere recognition and attention for either their cause or group can become their *raison d'être* and something worth fighting for. And as long as terrorism obliges, they have no reason to veer off course. This is especially true of some ideologue groups that are passionate about their cause. The revolutionary left-wing 17N organization in Greece is a case in point.



In comparison, a state does not need terrorism to make its presence known and its objectives are also never reduced to mere recognition and attention. This is not only due to the fact that a state normally enjoys these provisions by virtue of its advantageous power position in the society (although it may still utilize terrorism to further accentuate these privileges), but because as soon as it loses all its privileges, it immediately also ceases to be a state. Thus, having control or share in the power apparatus means that a state will always have much broader and wide-ranging concerns and irrespective of how much losses it suffers, its objectives will never be reduced to just recognition and attention.

Terrorism can therefore only turn symbolic when an actor with no real stake in the power apparatus loses all prospects of achieving its ultimate objective and is gradually consumed by the benefits that terrorism offers. This distinction is certainly significant as it is in all likelihood the only qualitative difference between state and non-state use of terrorism. However, it does not undermine the theatrical attribute or for that matter any other essential characteristic of terrorism. And for that reason it is largely inconsequential insofar as the conduct and understanding of terrorism as an independent activity is concerned.

In conclusion, this chapter has clearly shown that the theatrical attribute is largely independent of the actor and is applicable to both state and non-state actors alike. In doing so, it has not only challenged an important basis for treating terrorism as a non-state activity but has also shed light on some key facets of terrorism that subsequently emerged as the theatrical attribute was scrutinized. In particular, it drew attention to the benefits terrorism offers through carefully explaining its appeal and utility.

The analysis therefore has led to an easy and straightforward answer to the question of whether the theatrical attribute is indispensable to terrorism. If the theatrical attribute is the most outstanding and distinguishing characteristic of terrorism that not only embodies its benefits but also explains an actor's resort to it, then its exclusion from any conceptualization and definitional development is simply unacceptable. The theatrical attribute (or at least what it entails) is an indispensable characteristic of terrorism and it must therefore be incorporated into the formal understanding of the term.

## **5. Terrorism: Tactic, Strategy or ideology?**

The declaration of war on terrorism following the September 11 attacks in 2001 has raised serious normative and semantic challenges over the years. Stephen Biddle argues that terrorism is just a tactic and not the real enemy in the war against terrorism (2002: 8). Nora Besahel points out that ‘terrorism cannot be “defeated” because it is a tactic and not an enemy’ (2006:35). Pape concludes that terrorism is just a tactic that will always exist (2006: 238). Michael Innes criticizes the futility of waging a war on a tactic (2008:265). Crenshaw promptly asked how the United States could go to a war against a ‘method of violence’ (2011: 2).

Treating terrorism as a method, tactic, or strategy is certainly not unusual, yet what academics mean when they make such claims remains fairly unclear. A tactical understanding of terrorism raises questions over its strategic utility, whereas a strategic conceptualization of terrorism challenges its ideological understanding and vice versa. This chapter will analyze this problem in detail and discern the various patterns of such usages in the academic discourse.

Understandably, scholars with diverse political and cultural backgrounds study terrorism across a range of different disciplines and therefore expecting consistency regarding terms like tactics and strategy is indeed a far cry. However, given the theoretical and conceptual stalemate and the fervent academic insistence that terrorism must be treated as a tactic or strategy, inconsistencies in the matter can hardly be excused.

Formal theorizing in this area can also particularly be helpful in resolving another fundamentally contentious issue over how to label an actor terrorist. Most academics regard the issue of labelling an actor terrorist as nothing more than a mere rhetorical façade utilized to delegitimize and demonize a political opponent. The debate over classifying someone as a terrorist, therefore, often hinges over political and moral considerations prompting many scholars to avoid the label terrorist altogether. However, as this chapter will demonstrate this need not be so. Keeping moral and political considerations aside, there is a scholarly way to resolve this dilemma.

In the academic discourse it is often very difficult to separate these three positions, especially because there is significant overlap between the terms ‘tactic’ and ‘strategy’ with the two often used interchangeably or even as synonyms. For clarity and formal theorizing, it is important therefore to first discuss all three separately.

### **Terrorism as a tactic**

Almost four decades ago Brian Jenkins suggested that terrorism should primarily be seen as a tactic (1975). Many other academics since then have made similar assertions. Carr cogently stated of terrorism that ‘whatever one thinks of the tactic, it is a tactic’ (2007: 47). Weinberg and Eubank argue that terrorism should be treated as a tactic that can be employed by anyone (2008: 186). In *The End of Terrorism* Weinberg forcefully asserts that ‘We sometimes forget that terrorism is a tactic that may be used by groups of varying sizes and different ambitions’ (2012: 75). Jones and Smith likewise believe that terrorism is ‘merely a tactic that can be employed by any social actor’ (2009: 300). Alex Schmid in his most recent definition of terrorism notes that terrorism is a special form of tactic (2011: 86).

The question however is, what exactly do we mean when we say that terrorism is a tactic? Does it entail a separate and unique set of methods that sets terrorism apart or is there more to it than meets the eye? For Jenkins the tactical nature of terrorism can best be captured by the ‘nature of the act’ (1980: 2). This nature of the act has varying and different understanding in the academic community.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary<sup>53</sup> defines a tactic as ‘an action or method that is planned and used to achieve a particular goal’.<sup>54</sup> If we were to follow this standard dictionary definition then terrorism as a tactic would be understood as a specific method or action geared towards achieving a certain goal. In academic understanding, this specific goal-oriented action can be said to incorporate two senses- instrument and effect.

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<sup>53</sup> I find the dictionary definition a good starting point, given the dearth of understanding on the terms under discussion.

<sup>54</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tactic>. Accessed on 16-02-2015.

The instrumental understanding of terrorism as a tactic further incorporates two elements- method and manner. In terms of practical method utilized, terrorism is said to include a range of different activities such as bombing, shooting, hijacking, kidnapping, assassination etc. The manner includes the way in which these methods are carried out such as concealment, surprise, deception, secrecy, stealth, conspiracy and so on (See e.g. Gibbs, 1989; Crenshaw, 2011). Although both the method and manner appear to incorporate a range of diverse activities, yet the element of method can accurately be captured by the term 'violence' or the threat of it. Manner, on the other hand, can be encapsulated by the word 'clandestine'. Given that terrorism is first and foremost political, the instrumental view of tactical terrorism can be explained as 'clandestine political violence'.

The radical theorist Carlos Marighella was an advocate of this purely instrumental view. For him terrorism can simply be exercised 'by throwing a bomb which harms the enemy' (Thorup, 2008: 237). Mark Sedgwick describes Rapoport's 'four waves of terrorism' in an instrumental sense by pointing out that 'the first wave was distinguished by assassination, the second wave by military targeting, and the third wave by hostage taking. The current, fourth wave is distinguished by suicide bombing' (2004: 796). Although Sedgwick's deduction is certainly an overgeneralization, it does however, convey and capture the essence of a purely instrumental view of terrorism.

Now the question is how useful does the academic community find this instrumental approach. Not surprisingly, many academics object to a strictly instrumental view of terrorism. English is critical of this view and points out that such methods and the manner in which they are conducted can be found in other forms of violence, such as guerrilla warfare and insurgency as well, a dilemma he refers to as the problem of 'related phenomenon' (2009: 12). A strictly instrumental view therefore is not very helpful in distinguishing terrorism from other forms of violence.

The second sense of the tactical understanding 'effect' aims to address the 'related phenomenon problem' by focusing on the immediate outcome and consequence of the instrumental sense. Hence, instead of focusing on the specific method used and the manner in which it is conducted, the second sense of the tactical position looks at the effect of terrorist actions.

Different academics point to different effects that a terrorist tactic produces. The most commonly emphasized among them are fear, shock, and intimidation.<sup>55</sup> All these effects are drawn from the word ‘terror’ in the term terrorism and are in essence psychological. Arthur Garrison, for instance, points out that ‘Terrorism is a tool to cause change through the infliction of fear. The use of terrorism as a method to achieve results remains constant regardless of the desired result’ (2004: 272). Kruglanski and Fishman, likewise, conclude that terrorism is essentially a tool and a ‘fear-inducing tactic for the advancement of one’s objectives’ (2006: 211). This fear-inducing element can be regarded as the effect of the terrorist tactic.<sup>56</sup>

At a tactical level then it can roughly be concluded that terrorism is an *instrument with effect: fear-inducing clandestine political violence*. Although the manner in which tactical terrorism is conducted is usually clandestine, there can be instances where it is clearly not (as I shall explain later). For a universally applicable classification, it will be better therefore to leave out the clandestine attribute. Thus, a terrorist tactic is simply *fear inducing political violence*.

There are of course a number of scholars that will contest this tactical categorization of terrorism as it is often argued that terrorism does not necessarily induce fear (See e.g. Coady, 2004: 6). Nevertheless, such criticism is generally directed not so much at terrorism failing to generate fear but more so towards other forms violence doing the same. As English, points out that ‘terror’ in itself is not a defining characteristic of terrorism as it can also be observed in conventional wars (English, 2009: 6).

Categorizing a terrorist tactic simply as fear inducing political violence can therefore be troublesome as all forms of violence can inflict fear. However, the two senses of tactical terrorism, instrument and effect, when taken together, also suggest that terrorism is purposeful violence and not violence for violence’s sake. The actors want to create an effect for which they rationally and purposefully decide to use the instrument of violent intimidation. The effect of this instrumental violence is psychological and since it is purposeful, it is intended to alter the behavior of a target audience in some way. This instrument with effect in other words is utilized to ‘coerce’ an opponent.

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<sup>55</sup> See e.g. the definitions proposed by Bruce Hoffman (2006) and Alex Schmid (2011).

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed account of the characteristic of fear, please refer to Chapter 1.

The tactic of terrorism can therefore be summed up as *fear inducing coercive political violence*. It must also be pointed out here that this tactical categorization of terrorism does not specify the perpetrator and is therefore actor neutral. I will also argue that at a tactical level, generating fear is the deliberate intention of the actor, a point that will be explained in the discussion at the end.

### **Terrorism as a strategy**

Like the tactical element, numerous scholars also highlight the strategic dimension of terrorism (See e.g. Devine and Rafalko, 1982; Gibbs, 1989; Claridge, 1999; Tilly, 2004; Silke, 2006). Despite this however, terrorism as a strategy is poorly understood and remains largely under-theorized. Although there have been few praiseworthy efforts to conceptualize terrorism as such but almost all such efforts have failed to distinguish between terrorist tactics and strategy.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines strategy as ‘a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal usually over a long period of time’.<sup>57</sup> Terrorism as a strategy can accordingly be interpreted as a careful long-term design to achieve a particular goal. As at the tactical level, it is important to acknowledge any strategic understanding of terrorism first and foremost in political terms. In the academic language, this careful long-term design can be said to incorporate two elements- operation and communication.

The operational level broadly refers to the conduct of terrorist activity. In the operational sense, terrorism can be seen as a long-term asymmetrical form of warfare. Silke believes that only those who see terrorism as a form of warfare have a complete and comprehensive view of what it really is (1996: 13). English likewise argues that that ‘it is perhaps as a subspecies of warfare that terrorism is best understood’ (2009: 23). Several other leading scholars in the field like Clutterbuck (1977) and Schmid (2011) also endorse this position. Everett Wheeler’s work in this vein is particularly noteworthy.

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<sup>57</sup> Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy>. Accessed on 17/02/2015.

Wheeler places terrorism 'within the larger framework of universal history, in hope of shedding new light on terrorism's conceptual origins and theoretical debts' (1991: 7). She views terrorism as a primitive form of warfare that derives from the 'Graeco-Roman military doctrine of stratagem' (p. 6). This doctrine of Stratagem is describes as, 'Reliance on surprise, ambush, hit-and-run tactics, trickery, and avoidance of open pitched battle' that are 'the hallmarks of primitive warfare, which some primitives continued to use in conflicts against more advanced societies, and which weaker forces have often exploited against numerically or technologically superior foes' (p. 18). Seen as a form of warfare, terrorism tends to have a close relationship with guerrilla warfare. As Wheeler explains that terrorism should be seen as a conceptual offshoot of guerrilla warfare, with which it continues to enjoy a fluid relationship (p. 16-19).

The relationship observed between terrorism and guerrilla warfare is particularly intriguing especially at the operational level of analysis, as both guerrillas and terrorists tend not only to share an operational inventory but also draw from an overlapping conceptual and theoretical framework. Merari's work in this regard is of significant importance. Although he admits that it is very difficult to completely isolate terrorism from guerrilla warfare, his classification and categorization is still very helpful in furthering our operational understanding of terrorism.

Merari treats both terrorism and guerrilla warfare as strategies of insurgency, where the insurgents can opt for any of the two depending on their circumstances. The insurgents are fully aware of their inferiority to the opposition and view terrorism as a form of protracted struggle 'designed to wear out the adversary' (1993: 236).

Merari believes that a terrorist 'lacks the material element of guerrilla' and does not have physical control of a territory. 'The need to dominate a territory is a key element in insurgent guerrilla strategy... terrorist strategy does not vie for a tangible control of territory' (p. 225). He further points out that guerrillas as opposed to terrorists operate in relatively larger groups or platoons. The actions of guerrillas are considered somewhat similar to that of a regular army with 'ordinary military-type arms, such as rifles, machine-guns, mortars and even artillery' whereas the 'typical terrorist weapons include home-made bombs, car bombs and sophisticated barometric pressure-operated devices, designed to explode on board airliners in mid-air' (p. 226). Thus the guerrillas because of their greater numbers, material superiority and control over territory often freely carry arms and even wear uniforms (See e.g. Guelke, 2009;

Hoffman, 2006). The terrorists on the other hand, due to their relatively weaker strength, avoid direct military confrontation with the enemy. Instead they usually blend in with the civilian population and engage clandestinely in a protracted struggle against a much stronger enemy. It is this protracted clandestine nature of their operation that underscores their operational strategy.

Wheeler's doctrine of stratagem with an operational inventory of surprise, ambush, hit-and-run, trickery, avoidance of direct confrontation- in short, a strategy of exhaustion (as she eloquently put it) in combination with Merari's strategy of protracted clandestine asymmetrical struggle (numerically inferior, covert mode of operation, lack of territory) captures the essence of the operational logic of terrorist strategy.

The other element of the terrorist strategy, 'communication', mainly captures the consequential dimension of the operational view. The communicative logic of terrorism has already been outlined in the previous chapter. It will suffice to say here that the terrorist communication strategy operates at a psychological level where it primarily intends to generate a message for a certain target audience. The message is intended to not only communicate some demands or grievances but also a future threat of harm. It is thus primarily intended to alter the behavior of the target audience in some manner by influencing them psychologically.

Both Wheeler and Merari emphasize this psychological ingredient while conceptualizing their otherwise operational understanding of terrorism. Wheeler believes that terrorism is a 'strategy of psychological warfare' and it is this psychological component that in combination with other factors leads to a strategy of exhaustion (1993: 11). Merari, likewise, points out that although all forms of violence have a significant psychological impact- for terrorism, however, it is the most essential and distinguishing feature (1993: 233). 'As a strategy' Merari argues, 'terrorism remains in the domain of psychological influence and lacks the material elements of guerrilla' (p. 225). This psychological impact in combination with its clandestine operation is mainly intended to coerce an intended audience.

The operational view by itself is analytically unsustainable and does not adequately explain the terrorist strategy. It is only in combination with the communication factor that we get a full picture of the strategy that is terrorism. This operation communication design (the essence of terrorist strategy) can also be expressed by a



phrase that has been popular within the terrorism discourse since its inception, namely, 'propaganda by deed'. The phrase propaganda by deed has two key words, 'propaganda' and 'deed' and I shall explain how this phrase captures the logic of terrorist strategy.

Paul Brousse, a French anarchist is widely credited with first using the phrase 'propaganda by deed' (Jensen, 2004: 124). The idea of propaganda by deed did not grow out of vacuum or out of a desire to carry out meaningless violence. It was a calculated and well thought out strategy to bring about some desired change through systematic use of violence as all other means were either deemed ineffective or unavailable. Brousse argued that the traditional tools of propaganda such as pamphlets and political rallies were largely ineffective and 'inherently limited in spreading the anarchist message to the masses and that the message had to be supplemented by deeds and actions' (Garrison, 2004: 265).

Brousse believed that the majority of the masses were illiterate and too busy with their lives to pay any attention to the traditional mode of propaganda. Moreover, such a medium of communication could be countered or altered by the ruling elite. The message of the revolutionaries would therefore never reach its intended audience and would be lost forever. What was necessary, therefore, was a practical demonstration, which would catch immediate attention of the masses and awaken their conscious (Wardlaw, 1989: 21). Through propaganda by deed, the revolutionaries hoped that their violent actions would 'transform them from a small conspiratorial club into massive revolutionary movement' (Chaliand & Blin, 2007: 33).

The Russian philosopher and famous anarchist Peter Kropotkin further developed Brousse's ideas. Kropotkin discussed the power and effectiveness of the deed. He pointed out that 'actions which compel general attention... make more propaganda than thousands of pamphlets' (Townshend, 2002: 56). His philosophy was put into practice by the Russian anarchist movement Narodnaya Volya the will of the people (Laqueur, 2002: 34). The revolutionary group had given up on the idea of achieving any meaningful change through peaceful means and decided to take direct action through adopting the logic of propaganda by deed (p. 11-12). It was a small group that operated clandestinely against a much stronger enemy and never had any territory under its control. It selected its targets very carefully so that they could have

maximum communication effect. Through psychologically influencing the target audience it intended to coerce them into conceding to its demands. The group in other words adopted a violent communicative operational strategy to achieve its goals.

As pointed earlier the phrase propaganda by deed has two key words ‘propaganda’ and ‘deed’. We can now see that the word deed can be explained comprehensively by the operational logic whereas the word propaganda is perhaps best expressed in terms of terrorisms’ communicative upshot.

Thus, a group that deems peaceful means ineffective, is numerically far inferior to its opponent (*asymmetric*) and does not command any territory, decides to operate *clandestinely* through blending in with ordinary citizenry. Its clandestine mode of operation is intended to be a *protracted* struggle that would lead to exhaustion and eventual defeat of its enemy. This protracted clandestine asymmetrical operation can be regarded as the ‘deed’ of terrorism. The operation (or the deed) is intended to have a psychological impact on the group’s intended target audience. This psychological impact is achieved through carefully directing the violent operations towards specific targets that can resonate with the wider intended audience. The generation of message through psychologically influencing an audience is the ‘propaganda’ of terrorism. Taken together, the deed and the propaganda are intended to *coerce* an opponent into conceding to certain demands. The strategy of terrorism can thus be summed up as a *protracted, clandestine, asymmetrical and coercive political violence*.<sup>58</sup>

### **Terrorism as an ideology**

Unlike the tactical and strategic elements, treatment of terrorism as an ideology does not receive any serious academic patronage. This does not however mean that scholars make no reference to it or even use it in an implicit sense.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ideology as ‘The set of beliefs characteristic of a social group or individual.’<sup>59</sup> In line with this definition terrorism as an ideology

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<sup>58</sup> Although this strategic understanding of terrorism is clearly non-state centric, it will however be shown later in the discussion that the strategy of terrorism is in fact independent of the actor.

<sup>59</sup> Available at: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ideology>. Accessed on 19/02/2015.

will be understood as a set of distinct and rigid beliefs that terrorists adhere to. In academic understanding, terrorism, when referred to as an ideology, generally implies that it has a distinct underlying philosophy, which gives it certain dogmatic and doctrinal characteristics. In other words, terrorism can be said to have a unitary existence that is fundamentally and inherently different from other forms of violence.

The tendency to tread terrorism as an ideology is rooted in the ‘-ism’ of terrorism (Guelke, 2009: 16). As most expressions that end with an ‘-ism’ are words for ideologies like communism, socialism, and anarchism, it is perhaps not surprising that terrorism too is often treated as an ideology. Now the question is, what exactly is this underlying philosophy and ideology of terrorism? This question can be answered by first briefly analyzing the ‘ends-means’ and ‘moral’ dimensions of terrorism.

The ends-means debate mainly entails that every action (mean) taken is generally geared towards achieving a certain goal (end). This debate borrows from the rational choice theory where actors and the choices they make to achieve certain goals are believed to be rational (See e.g. Kruglanski and Fishman, 2006). Following this logic, the actions taken by terrorists, assuming that they are rational, must also be for achieving certain objectives. The tactical and strategic positions discussed above account for both the mean (instrumental and operational) and the end (effect and communication).<sup>60</sup> Thus, according to these two positions the terrorist means are not devoid of any meaningful ends, although it is widely believed that the distance between the terrorist’s means and ends is fairly large and that the link is often very difficult to establish (Guelke, 2009). However, as long as terrorism is seen as tactic or strategy, a relationship, no matter how vague or indirect, will always be observed between its means and ends.

A pure ideological position, on the other hand, downplays the rational choice model and does not separate the means and ends of the terrorists. It views the terrorist mean- the violent action- as an end in itself. Thus, from an ideological standpoint, the terrorist violence does not have any strategic or tactical elements- it is in effect violence for violence’s sake. Although some advocates of the ideological position may argue that terrorism can have strategic and tactical elements or that the actors can

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<sup>60</sup> By ‘end’ here, I am not implying the ultimate goal of the group. But instead what the violent action or its credible threat end up producing in its immediate aftermath.

be rational but such a position will indirectly imply that terrorism is purposeful and that will be logically unsustainable and contradict the overall ideological edifice.

The conflation of means and ends also gives rise to the moral problem as Wilkinson usefully notes ‘Much confusion occurs in the debate on the morality of terrorism because of a failure to distinguish ends and means’ (2000: 218). Failure to distinguish between the terrorists’ means and ends gives terrorism the appearance of senseless and meaningless violence that should be unequivocally condemned and disapproved. This unequivocal condemnation and disapproval leads to terrorism being reduced to a pejorative and derogatory term and bolsters the assertion that terrorism must always be unjustified. The debate on the moral problem is fairly extensive and has been discussed elsewhere in the thesis. However, it is important to note that the derogatory connotation of the term terrorism, which designates all terroristic violence as morally abhorrent and unacceptable, contributes to it being seen as an irrational and mindless activity. Although it is important to point out here that advocates of the ideological position may not necessarily denounce all perpetrators as insane or even irrational. But they do view them all as immoral and tie them down to their actions in a manner that severs any ties with the terrorist goals.<sup>61</sup>

To summarize, terrorism when seen purely as an ideology, does not distinguish between its means and ends and the perpetrators are not seen independent of their actions. The terrorist activity subsequently is regarded as immoral and irrational. The essence of this position is captured by Mark Rigstad’s assertion, ‘The concept of ‘terrorism’ designates the class of phenomenon associated with these acts and the agents who perform them, and it is therefore presumptively condemnatory’ (2008: 76). It is this view that allows scholars like Etzioni and Raufer to use terms such as ‘distinct species’ (2010: 1) and ‘lifeforms’ (2003: 392) to describe terrorists. Furthermore, since the ends of terrorists cannot be discerned, ideological terrorism, unlike tactical and strategic, cannot be said to be politically motivated. Thus, terrorism, when treated as an ideology, evidently has no political ends, and is an *irrational and immoral violent activity in which violence acts as an end in itself*.

As pointed out earlier, even though there is a widespread tendency to treat terrorism as an ideology the position however does not receive much academic patronage, at

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<sup>61</sup> This issue has been discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

least not by serious commentators in the field. Instead, what is more prevalent is a general academic acknowledgement that such a practice exists and a resounding condemnation of it. Many academics are often quick to point out that terrorism (which they otherwise see as a tactic or strategy) has erroneously been given the characteristics of an ideology. As Coady says 'There is a strong tendency in the scholarly and sub-scholarly literature on terrorism to treat it as something like an ideology. There is an equally strong tendency to treat it as always immoral. Both tendencies go hand in hand with a considerable degree of uncertainty about the meaning of the term terrorism' (1985: 47).

Wilkinson and various other leading scholars in the field have also expressed their concerns. Wilkinson points out that, 'Among scholars who have studied political violence it is generally accepted that terrorism is a special form of political violence. It is not a philosophy or a political movement' (1992: 289). In similar vein, Charles Tilly also notes that social scientists 'should doubt the existence of a distinct, coherent class of actors (terrorists) who specialize in a unitary form of political action (terror) and thus should establish a separate variety of politics (terrorism)' (2004: 5). Michael Dartnell believes that it is because of its verbal resemblance with words like liberalism, communism, and anarchism, terrorism misleadingly suggests that it is a 'unitary phenomenon' (1999: 2000).

However, in spite of these academic criticisms there are widespread inconsistencies. More than often, scholars that are strongly skeptical of the ideological view, end up taking it themselves. David Rapoport, for instance, treats terrorism as a tactic (2008: 169), yet at the same time also asserts that 'terrorism is a process, a way of life, a dedication' (1971: 38), which is more in line with an ideological view of terrorism. How can terrorism be a way of life if it is just a tactic? For even if an actor focuses solely on the terrorist tactic (amid no chance of achieving its goals), its use of terrorism can never completely be divorced from the underlying political ideology that it adheres to.

If terrorism is a tactic then the specification of the actor should not matter (Crenshaw, 2011: 4), yet some scholars view terrorism as a tactic and then tie it to a specific class of actors. As Richardson (otherwise a strong advocate of a tactical view of terrorism) points out, 'terrorism is an act of sub-state groups, not states' (2006: 21). Laqueur also

believes that ‘terrorism is not an ideology but an insurrectional strategy’ (2002: 4). Richardson and Laqueur’s curious position of seeing terrorism as a tactic yet at the same time tying it down to only non-state actors is contradictory and inconsistent. Such inconsistencies largely exist because terrorism as an ideology, strategy, and tactic has never been properly conceptualized. Before we move on to discussion, it is important to highlight some of these inconsistencies to show why research in this area urgently needed.

### **Academic inconsistencies**

The academic conception of terrorism as a tactic, strategy, or ideology is far from consistent. A lack of formal theorizing in the area has not only lead to conflicting and opposing positions in the discourse but has also contributed towards a trend of generalization and oversimplification of the problem. Most scholars treat the terms as self-explanatory and merely just state that terrorism is a tactic or a strategy without ever feeling the need to explain what they mean. This however is far from true as there is no common understanding of what a terrorist tactic or strategy is. As a result of this, what is a tactic for many is strategic or even ideological for others and vice versa. Although a misunderstanding between a tactical and strategic conception is understandable (given the terminological overlap) but confusion with ideological terrorism is extremely puzzling.

Giandomenico Picco (2005) makes a distinction between tactical and strategic terrorism. Picco believes that terrorism is not a ‘one dimensional phenomenon’ and that there is a fundamental difference between tactical and strategic terrorism (p. 11). Terrorism is tactical if it is used as an instrument to achieve a specific well defined end. This tactical terrorism, he believes, is rational, has arguably reasonable demands, and can be negotiated with (p.12-13). On the other hand, Picco considers terrorism strategic when it does not have any well-defined ends, makes irrational claims, and places paramount importance on ideology. He argues that strategic terrorism is used only for confrontational sake and is rooted in an ‘insurmountable sense of exclusion, on an unbridgeable gap with the ‘other’ ’ (p. 14).

Picco uses his tactical understanding for nationalist and separatist groups like IRA and Hezbollah and applies his strategic logic to groups like Al-Qaeda. He believes that since strategic terrorism is only for confrontational sake, the stated political goals of such groups are therefore of no relevance. 'Strategic terrorism is not interested in the veniality of the single political issue. They are tools to be used to make sure that the confrontation goes on and the appeal of the confrontation never ends' (p. 14).

Similarly, James Piazza, also makes a distinction between strategic and what he calls 'universal/abstract groups' (2009). Strategic groups are the ones that have 'limited and discrete goals' and are assumed to be rational actors that can be negotiated with. Universal/abstract groups, on the other hand, are primarily driven by ideology and have no rational considerations (p. 65-66). Piazza uses his distinction to designate Al-Qaeda as a universal/abstract group.

Devin Jessee, in comparison, presents a very different understanding of terrorist tactics and strategy (2006). He ties the notions of tactic and strategy to the intensity of the terrorist act. He believes that when an act of terrorism is conducted on a large scale, harms high value targets and results in widespread consequences, then it should be viewed as strategic. On the other hand, when the attacks are low profile and carried out 'in a less dramatic fashion' then they should be considered tactical (p. 368). Using this model, Jessee suggests that the 9/11 attacks were on a large-scale, had widespread consequences, and were therefore strategic. Whereas a random bomb attack on a police station in Iraq is low-key, restrained and less dramatic and is therefore tactical (p. 368).

These examples clearly illustrate that scholars have a very different understanding of terrorism as a tactic, strategy, and ideology. Picco's conceptualization appears to be completely at odds with Piazza's categorization. Where Picco views strategic terrorism as ideologically driven, rigid, and uncompromising, Piazza holds it to be rational, calculated and accommodating. Piazza's strategic understanding is more in line with what Picco categorizes as tactical terrorism. On the other hand, Piazza's universal/abstract categorization can be explained by Picco's strategic logic. It becomes obvious that one academic's tactical understanding of terrorism can easily be another's strategic.

Jessee's position discussed above presents a rather novel approach to the problem. He links both tactic and strategy directly to the nature of the act. Thus, if an attack is on a small-scale and does not result in any grave consequences then it is tactical and if it is a large-scale, high impact attack then it is strategic. This rather simplistic categorization is clearly not in any way representative of common understanding of the problem. Judging terrorism to be tactical or strategic based on just one attack not only seems odd but also poses serious analytical problems. On what scale should an attack take place to be tactical? Can a very low-scale high consequence attack be strategic? How can the consequences of an attack be measured? Would the frequency in attacks make any difference?

Where Picco and Piazza's conceptualization of the problem demonstrates a contradiction in terms, Jessee's position highlights the dangers of oversimplification. Of course these just happen to be random examples that are not in any way representative of the entire discourse, yet they are still demonstrative of the prevailing practices and are able to draw our attention to the problem.

It is also worth remembering here that most academics merely just use the terms tactic, strategy and ideology- treating the terms as self-explanatory and without feeling the need to explain them. This makes it all the more difficult to critically analyze the individual positions of most scholars on the matter. It would of course make little sense to spell out a usage if there was any common or popular understanding of a terrorist tactic, strategy or ideology. However, as the discussion so far has shown, no such common understanding exists and all three terms are more than often used differently or interchangeably. Hence, to treat the terms as if they are self-explanatory, in the context of terrorism, is certainly not helpful. But before we try to set this confusion right, it is important to discuss the problem of categorizing that results from this prevailing confusion.

### **The challenge of categorizing**

Generally academics that endorse a tactical or a strategic view of terrorism also posit that a range of different actors can employ it. These actors could be insurgents, guerrillas, revolutionaries, and for some even states. Critical scholars like Jackson,



Dexter, Shanahan, Goodin have repeatedly asserted that terrorism is independent of the actor. Although such assertions are widespread, they do raise a number of complex issues, which are usually never addressed in any rigorous sense. For instance, what happens to the status of an actor when it utilizes terrorist tactics or strategy? Does it lose its previous designation and become a terrorist instead or is it possible for an actor to retain both labels? Can anyone who utilizes terroristic violence be a terrorist? Is there any difference between groups opting for terrorist tactics instead of terrorist strategy?

An academic distinction can generally be observed between terrorism as a supplementary or auxiliary tool (i.e. a tactic or a strategy) as opposed to being pure and absolute. As Charles Townshend points out ‘Terrorist actions may be auxiliary-one element of a larger military or guerrilla strategy... or it may be ‘absolute’- the pursuit of political goals through the systematic use of terror alone’ (2002: 13). Townshend is not alone in this assertion as other leading scholars in the field also make similar assertions.

Wilkinson makes an important distinction ‘between pure terrorism used in isolation and terrorism as an auxiliary weapon in a wider repertoire of violence’ (1992: 290). Coady also points out that terrorism generally is used as a tool in the service of wider goals, however, ‘with some terrorist operations it may be that the terror itself has assumed the status of an end so that terrorism has become a sort of ideology’ (1985: 48-49). Townshend’s absolute, Wilkinson’s pure, and Coady’s an end in itself, appear to designate what I have referred to earlier as an ideological view of terrorism. The auxiliary view, on the other hand, corresponds to the tactical and strategic positions. I will discuss the implications of the auxiliary view first.

The auxiliary view of terrorism lends it the flexibility to be employed by various actors in a range of different conflicts. This means that actors like guerrillas, rebels, and insurgents may utilize terrorism as their mode of resistance or opposition. As English pithily notes, ‘terrorism often overlaps with guerilla violence or with campaigns that might be termed insurgent’ (2009: 12). Crenshaw also points out that ‘terrorism occurs in the context of civil war, insurgency, or other manifestations of wider violence’ (2011: 3).

The question however is, if terrorism is used in this auxiliary sense, should then its practitioners be called terrorists? Or are they still guerrilla or insurgent that utilize terrorist tactics or strategy? Or can both labels be used to describe them? The problem is that using terrorism in an auxiliary capacity is not the same as using vandalism for instance. Because when a group uses vandalism, no matter how frequently, it can still retain its label. With terrorism, however, it is not as straight forward. To understand this, we have to again revisit the term's pejorative undertone. But first I will explain this problem with a hypothetical example.

If, for instance, some insurgents utilize terrorist tactics (or strategy) to achieve their goals then what should they be called? Will they cease to be insurgents or will their status change to terrorists? If their status changes to terrorists then this means that insurgents in principle cannot use terrorist tactics, because if they do, then they will cease to be insurgents and will instead transform into terrorists. The assertion then that insurgents can utilize terrorist tactics therefore becomes invalid. If their status stays insurgency then this will imply that insurgents may use terrorist tactics without being labeled terrorist.

It appears then, the academics that insist insurgents, guerillas and conventional armies may utilize terrorist tactics are essentially arguing that such utilization does not necessarily make the practitioners terrorists. There is clearly an academic hesitation, if not an outright reluctance, to label organizations such as Irish Republican Army (IRA), Hezbollah, Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and many others as terrorist organizations, although they are frequently accused of employing terrorist tactics. Is it then that for most academics terrorism (and in extension terrorists) is qualitatively different from terrorist tactics/strategy? That utilization of a terrorist tactic or strategy alone does not make one a terrorist? Is then the auxiliary view of terrorism analytically unsustainable?

As pointed out earlier, the pejorative undertone of the term terrorism generates contempt and revulsion and undermines the legitimacy of the actor. It is therefore not surprising if some authors choose not to denounce an overall organization/actor as terrorist and instead choose to see its certain isolated acts as terroristic. However, this creates a contradiction in terms and causes semantic confusion, as it not clear which

criteria makes one a terrorist. There are numerous examples of such a practice and I will highlight a few here.

Peter Chalk views the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Organization (MILF), nationalist/separatist movements in Philippines, primarily as guerrilla groups that periodically use 'terrorist-type tactics' (2001: 248). Hence he acknowledges that the groups engage in some terroristic activity but does not see the over all movements as terrorist. Arquilla and Karasik analyze the Chechen resistance against Russia and throughout their discussion use terms like rebels, fighters, small-armed bands, and largely abstain from referring to them as terrorists. However, at the same time, they point out that these rebels have on occasions employed certain terroristic actions (1999). Similarly, in a discussion on Iran and Hezbollah, Daniel Byman notes that 'Hezbollah is now better characterized as a guerrilla and political movement that at times uses terrorism rather than as a pure terrorist group' (2008: 173). An analysis of the terrorism literature reveals that such considerations are usually reserved for nationalist and separatist movements such as the ones going on in Palestine, Chechnya, and Kashmir.

A parallel view in this discussion that merits attention is the transitional position, which involves seeing terrorism as a stage that most groups generally pass through. As opposed to the auxiliary view where terrorism is something that can be utilized at any stage, the transitional position views terrorism as either a first stage an organization goes through or something that it evolves into because of its circumstances. As Merari points out, 'Terrorism is the first form of violence that appears when conflicts escalate' (1999: 52).

This position is based on the assumption that revolutionary groups are weak in the beginning and have very limited resources and personnel. Terrorism alternatively presents a low-cost high impact alternative. It is, however, deemed essential for the group to eventually make a transition to another form of violence if it wants to succeed or survive in the long run. As William Miller explains, 'Without a transition to guerrilla warfare, however, terrorism becomes, as its name suggests, the meaningless taking of life and spread of fear' (2000: 72). Miller also points out that an organization may revert back to terrorism if it suffers significant losses (p. 64). From such a perspective, although terrorism is seen as a choice of necessity, its eventual

success and survival is tied to its transition into other forms of violence, as Merari notes ‘One might say that all terrorist groups wish to be guerrillas when they grow up’ (1993: 245).

This transitional explanation, however, appears somewhat naïve and simplistic<sup>62</sup> as Wilkinson explains ‘there is no universal pattern so far as the decision to use terrorism is concerned’ and that there is no ‘discernible evolutionary pattern’ whereby organizations start exclusively as terrorist and later acquire the weaponry and manpower for a wider insurgency (2002: 15-16). Weinberg also points out that there is no particular reason why different actors should follow a standard choreography and ‘Some insurgents employ terrorism during the middle and the end of their efforts as their opening measures’ (2012: 76).

Hence, the transitional position largely fails to explain why so many established insurgencies and guerrilla forces are charged with using terrorist tactics or strategy. It also challenges the assertion that terrorism is independent of the actor and evades the question of when an organization starts or ceases to be a terrorist organization and whether and if an organization can simultaneously carry two labels.

The auxiliary view of terrorism is certainly the more dominant one in the discourse. As Wilkinson notes, ‘The mixed form of terrorism is the general rule in all major areas of conflict throughout the world’ (1992: 290). This auxiliary view suggests that one cannot have a one-dimensional view of terrorism and the actors that practice it. As Michael Boyle argues, ‘terrorism is one card among many that can be used by actors’ (2012: 529). This means that organizations that utilize terrorism perform multiple functions and since each function is radically different from the other, each of its roles could pull the organization in a completely different direction. Hence, a focus on a certain aspect of the organization may establish it as terrorist, while an emphasis on another may reveal it to be guerilla or insurgent.

The question however is, which of these roles should describe the organization as a whole? As Christopher Finlay points out, ‘Would only one proper act in the course of an armed campaign stretching over decades be sufficient to justify the terrorist label

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<sup>62</sup> Even Merari (1999) and Miller (2000) who make a case for this position are highly skeptical of it and believe that in reality there is a significant mixing and overlapping.

or would there have to be more' (2009: 756). He explains this problem by employing the logic of synecdoche 'where one part of a greater organization... can be used to characterize the organization as a whole' (Ibid). Finlay concludes that this problem is unlikely to get any definite answer at least from the field of philosophy.

Boaz Ganor believes he has a solution to this problem. He optimistically suggests that the issue can be resolved through conducting a quantitative analysis to measure the frequency of different functions the organization performs. If it chiefly engages with terrorist activities then it should be labeled as a terrorist actor and vice versa (2002: 297). This is an appealing but clearly an impractical proposition. Subjecting the actions of an organization to an academically rigorous quantitative analysis is not only painstakingly difficult but will have very little practical impact. Furthermore, such an approach lumps terrorist tactics and strategy together which, as this chapter shall argue, is conceptually unhelpful.

The auxiliary view of terrorism discussed above rests on the assumption that there is an absolute and pure form of terrorism, which is qualitatively and fundamentally different from its supplementary variant. Before we go any further it is therefore important to address some important questions; what exactly is pure terrorism? Which characteristics make an organization a pure terrorist group? And how is it different from what could otherwise be described as un-pure or mixed groups?

Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca believe that the term terrorism has two senses, actor and action sense (2011: 451). And terrorism is pure when these actors (terrorists) carry out the actions (terrorist acts). They identify the actors as underground groups without any territorial control and coercive violence as the terrorist actions (p. 453). This leads them to conclude that pure terrorism is simply coercive violence by non-territorial groups (p. 461). Their categorization, although highly questionable, is representative of most actor-centric approaches in the discourse. Wilkinson also appears to follow similar logic when he suggests that terrorism is typically used as an auxiliary weapon in places like Central America where it is accompanied by wider insurgencies 'but in Western Europe and North America terrorism is usually seen in its 'pure' form' (1992: 290). And even though Wilkinson does not state it explicitly, it is fairly straightforward that it is mostly non-

territorial groups that carry out terroristic violence within Western Europe and North America.

Although an understanding of pure terrorism generally ties the actor and the action together, it will be unwise to categorically specify the actor as Calle and Cuenca do. Because if we follow their logic then terrorism can only be pure when the actor is an underground non-territorial group. Owing to this problematic classification, it is important to look at alternate understandings of pure terrorism.

Going back to the earlier basic classification of Townshend, Wilkinson, and Coady, pure terrorism is understood to be violence for violence's sake- an end in itself. No distinction is made between terrorism's means and ends and it is largely regarded as an irrational and immoral activity. The essence of this is captured by what I have already described as ideological terrorism. In order to further understand this ideological/pure terrorism, it is important to look at some examples.

In spite of different academic assertions, it is hard to find examples of pure terrorism. However, using the conceptualization of pure terrorism outlined in this chapter and drawing from popular academic understanding of it, it is possible to identify instances where terrorism can be seen in this absolute sense. This requires identifying groups that are largely viewed as irrational and consider violence as an end in itself.

Although some scholars like Picco and Piazza categorize groups like Al-Qaeda as a pure terrorist group, such categorization, however is not consistent with the conceptual understanding of ideological terrorism. Al-Qaeda clearly has political objectives, the individuals that make up the organization are generally regarded as rational, and their violence, more than often, is intended to send a message to a broader audience, which clearly contradicts the fundamentals of pure terrorism, as outlined in this chapter. Instead, groups that are generally described as nihilistic, millennialist, or apocalyptic appear to be the only fit for pure terrorism. These groups have very unusual ends that the broader community largely fails to understand and comprehend. The use of violence by such groups is more than often part of the overall group ideology and not usually a mean to any practical or rational end.

The Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan led by Shoko Asahara is a notoriously popular apocalyptic group. It is the only known sub-state group that has used biological

weapons by attacking a Tokyo subway with sarin gas. The group's rationale for using violence was to trigger an apocalyptic chain of events that would destroy the existing social and political order (Muir, 1999). Other millennialist groups such as 'Heaven's Gate' and 'Order of the Solar Temple' can also be viewed in similar vein. Even though the violence by the latter two was directed inward,<sup>63</sup> they still shared their irrational goals and beliefs with Aum (Whitsel, 2000).

Apocalyptic groups tend to isolate themselves from the wider society and are generally very skeptical of the established social and cultural norms. As a result, they have a very different understanding of standard moral and social values. Violence is generally arrived at purely because of ideological reasons, usually to fulfill an imagined prophecy, and not because of any rational mean/end considerations. As Richard Landes explains 'because apocalyptic believers consider themselves to be taking part in the final and ultimate conflict, normal considerations, including future consequences do not carry weight. Apocalyptic time, with its sense of urgency and threat, conflates means and ends, making unthinkable violence acceptable' (2002: 258).

The apocalyptic groups thus appear to have no regard for standard or accepted morality, generally have no message to communicate, and no mean/end considerations, which are basically the hallmarks of pure terrorism. Although the apocalyptic groups seem to fit perfectly well with the pure understanding of terrorism discerned earlier, their analysis raises serious question over the validity of the category of pure terrorism itself. If the groups are physically disconnected from the society, have no message to communicate to a broader audience, and no tangible political goals- should they even be considered terrorist? Certainly harboring apocalyptic beliefs is not the same as having political ambitions, which many consider a cornerstone of any terrorist violence.

The auxiliary view is somewhat built around the assumption that there is a freestanding absolute form of terrorism but if this pure or absolute terrorism does not exist then where does that leave its supplementary variants? Understandably it will be very convenient to brand an actor a terrorist if it practices pure terrorism (as apposed to when terrorism is adopted as a tactic or a strategy). However, if pure terrorism as

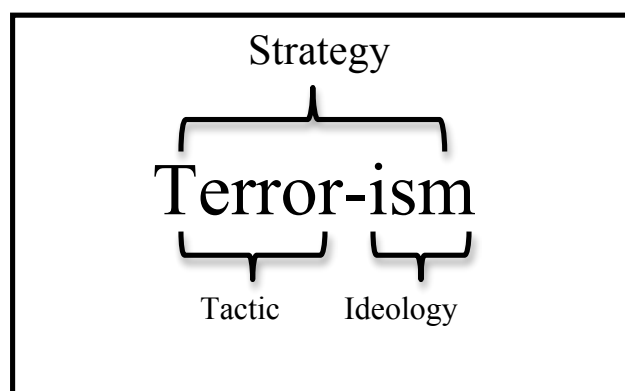
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<sup>63</sup> Both groups committed mass suicide in pursuit of their imagined goals (See Whitsel, 2000).

commonly understood does not exist and the auxiliary view is the only game in town then terrorism must either be a tactic or a strategy that is independent of the actor. And if terrorism is independent of the actor then who should be categorized as a terrorist? Does this not make the label terrorist highly questionable? I will now address these questions in greater detail.

## Discussion

As the figure below illustrates, the tactical, ideological, and strategic positions regarding terrorism can also be understood by analyzing and breaking down the word terrorism. A focus on the ‘terror’ of terrorism (fear-generating element) broadly corresponds to the tactical utility of terrorism. An excessive emphasis on the ‘ism’ of terrorism explains the ideological take on terrorism. And lastly, the word ‘terrorism’, taken as a whole, can explain the strategic logic of terrorism.



Before I address the multitude of questions that have been raised in this chapter, it is important first to distinguish between tactical and strategic terrorism and attend to the overlap between the two. Terrorism as a tactic has been categorized as an instrument with effect- *fear inducing coercive political violence*. On the other hand, strategic terrorism has been described as an operation communication design- *protracted, clandestine, asymmetrical, coercive political violence*, which can also be explained by the logic of propaganda by deed.



Significant overlap can be observed between the two. Both are first and foremost politically motivated. Both through the instrumental and operational logic convey that terrorism is in fact purposeful violence and not violence for violence's sake.<sup>64</sup> Both are also independent of the actor. And lastly, both are also coercive.

Moving on to the differences between the two: A terrorist strategy must be protracted and incorporate a long-term recurring pattern of terroristic violence, it is in a sense a form of warfare. Use of terroristic violence in strategic terrorism is expected and predictable. A terrorist strategy is therefore a long-term operational design in which terroristic violence is fairly predictable.

A terrorist tactic on the other hand, usually involves an isolated and individual act of violence that does not require a recurring long-term pattern of terroristic violence. Although terrorist tactics may be utilized in some protracted conflicts, however, in such instances, terroristic violence is infrequent and often far in between. The use of terroristic violence at a tactical level is therefore very unpredictable. It is important here to distinguish between unpredictability and irrationality. Where irrationality fails to understand the logic behind violence and the motives of the actors, unpredictability simply implies that such violence is unexpected and unforeseen.

Another difference between the two is regarding the clandestine nature of their activity. Where it is not necessary for tactical terrorism to be clandestine, strategic terrorism by its very nature is always clandestine. And although both have a psychological dimension to their violence, strategic terrorism need not necessarily intend to induce fear. This is a rather unusual and controversial proposition but it is also very important for understanding a fundamental difference between the two.

It has been suggested that both tactical and strategic violence aim to psychologically influence their target audience through effect and communication respectively. Now where the tactical effect seeks to primarily induce fear, strategic terrorism may not necessarily seek to evoke fear. Since strategic terrorism demands a long-term

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<sup>64</sup> Where the word 'instrument' would usually be applied to isolated and individual acts of violence, the term 'operation' would refer only to a long-term recurring pattern of violence.

protracted asymmetrical engagement with the adversary, the communication design may be utilized to send multiple messages to often multiple audiences.

Furthermore, since terroristic violence is very frequent and predictable, it may eventually lose its shock and awe value. This is not to say that strategic terrorism does not generate fear altogether, but merely to suggest that unlike tactical terrorism, generating fear is not necessarily its deliberate intention. The fear generated could well be a byproduct in strategic terrorism. As concluded in chapter one, generation of fear is fundamental to all terroristic violence- the key is to understand when it is deliberate and when it is merely a byproduct. When terrorism is employed tactically, the element of fear is utilized deliberately. Whereas in strategic terrorism, as terroristic violence becomes the primary or the only *modus operandi* of the actor, fear is often a byproduct rather than a deliberate intention.

It has been pointed out that both the terrorist tactic and strategy are independent of the actor, which means that both states and non-state actors can practice it. Although most academics view terrorist tactic and strategy in this light, their conceptualization of the problem however is almost always non-state centric. Merari's conceptualization of the terrorist strategy and Wilkinson's analysis of the terrorism problem is almost entirely non-state centric. As a result of this, their assertion that terrorism is independent of the actor and their subsequent analysis of the problem appear somewhat contradictory.

This of course is a widespread problem and is not restricted to just these two influential scholars. In spite of their otherwise assertions, most academics (due to the common inference of the term) conceptualize terrorism almost solely in light of non-state insurrectional terrorism. Consequently, significant inconsistencies and discrepancies can be observed throughout the terrorism discourse. As this chapter utilizes some of these academic models, it is important to reflect on them to address the inconsistencies and to truly accommodate all actors.

Firstly, it has been observed that terrorism, especially at the strategic level, operates clandestinely. This although generally true for most non-state actors, does not apply to states at all times, at least not at the tactical level. States may at times operate clandestinely but by virtue of their very nature and their privileged power position, they may either choose not to act clandestinely or simply fail to keep their activities as

such (as discussed in the previous chapter). It is mainly for this reason that the clandestine feature has been excluded from the tactical conceptualization of terrorism.

Wheeler and Merari's conceptualization of terrorism, utilized in this chapter, is also primarily insurrectional centric. As a result, they focus on a weaker foe that is numerically inferior and has no territory. Clearly, a state is not always a weak party in an asymmetrical conflict and certainly commands territory. It is for this reason that territorial control has also been excluded from the final conceptualization. I will now discuss and defend the elements that have been utilized.

The elements of 'protracted', 'asymmetrical', and 'clandestine' have been used for conceptualizing the terrorist strategy. All of these elements are independent of the actor and are very important for distinguishing a terrorist strategy from tactic. For a state to utilize terrorism strategically, its engagement must be asymmetrical and protracted. Since the terrorist strategy, as opposed to tactic, is a protracted long-term engagement, efforts are also made by the actors to keep it clandestine. However, the state and non-state actors keep their activities clandestine for different reasons and with varying degree of success. A non-state or insurrectional actor must keep its activities concealed because of its inferior status and for achieving greater psychological effect. A state, on the other hand, tries to keep its activities concealed largely because of international considerations and also to have greater psychological impact. Although unlike non-state actors its forces are physically visible and concealing its activities is not always successful.

The current Syrian regime under Bashar Al Assad provides a good example of the strategic use of terrorism. The regime is clearly engaged in a protracted struggle against a much weaker rebel force. Terroristic violence is being utilized to serve various ends and not just to inflict fear. This violence is largely coercive because it aims to influence the behavior of its target audience in some manner. And lastly, the regime also tries to conceal its actions to avoid international condemnation. The ongoing Syrian crisis is a protracted, clandestine, asymmetrical and coercive political violence, which has earlier been categorized as strategic terrorism.

At the tactical level, however, the element of clandestine is not very important (especially if the actor is state) and terrorism is simply used as an instrument to coerce the opponent through the infliction of fear. A good example of such a tactical use by

states would be the Allied bombing of Dresden and U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WWII. The intention there was to simply inflict fear and coerce the opponent (no attempt was made to conceal the act or the actor).

Thus, the states, like the non-state actors, may choose terrorism as a tactic or strategy. A strategic engagement of a state must be asymmetrical, protracted, and clandestine whereas a tactical commitment need only require coercion through intimidation. Hence, even though the model developed in this chapter borrows from insurrectional discourse, it is still able to accommodate any and all actors, provided of course they are political and rational.

After gaining clarity at the tactical and strategic level we can now analyze the third variant, ideological terrorism. Ideological (or pure/absolute) terrorism has been conceptualized in this chapter as an *irrational and immoral violent activity in which violence acts as an end in itself*. It has been argued that since pure terrorism fails to distinguish not only between the means and ends but also between the actors and their violence, therefore it is presumptuously irrational and immoral. This propensity to see terrorism as an ideology was found rooted in the ‘-ism’ of terrorism. By drawing on the conceptualization of pure terrorism sketched in this chapter, it was concluded that only apocalyptic/millennialist groups could practice pure terrorism. The analysis of these groups, however, raised serious concerns over the validity of category of pure terrorism itself.

Concerns over judging apocalyptic violence terroristic are not new, as many other academics have also objected to such categorization. This is mainly because all such groups challenge our most fundamental understanding of terrorism itself. As Jean Mayer in a discussion on religious cult groups points out, ‘It is important to note that many cases of religious violence have nothing to do with terrorism properly said’ (2001: 362). Gregory Koblentz challenges the categorization of Aum Shinrikyo as a terrorist organization in the Western discourse. He argues that where in the U.S. ‘Aum was being seen as representative of the larger class of terrorist groups... The view from Japan, however, was different... Instead the Japanese public saw Aum as a bizarre religious cult without any clear ideological or political objectives’ (2011: 508). Apocalyptic violence has no tangible political objectives, has no message to communicate, the goals and even the actors in most cases are not rational in any

sense, and the means and ends are mostly conflated. It becomes obvious that the understanding of pure terrorism as popularized, is logically and analytically unsustainable with our fundamental understanding of terrorism.

The question to be asked here is if there is no pure terrorism, then why do so many academics make a reference to it? Part of the answer has already been suggested. Pure terrorism lacks serious academic patronage<sup>65</sup> and most academics only make fleeting references to it. This mere acknowledgement of an imagined pure terrorism clearly has no analytical value. The reason why it lacks this patronage is because it contradicts our fundamental understanding of terrorism itself. Those that do venture to formally categorize pure terrorism mostly end up constructing analytically unstable edifices.

Picco and Piazza's categorization of Al- Qaeda as a pure terrorist group or Wilkinson's assertion that pure terrorism can chiefly be observed in the Western world (a reference to organizations like ETA, IRA etc.) is therefore grossly misleading. Not only does Al Qaeda and most terrorist groups in Europe have irrefutable political objectives, but they are also rational actors that seek to communicate through their threat of violence. Their violence is therefore purposive and not meaningless and irrational as the category of pure terrorism demands.

The other reason for the widespread acknowledgement of pure terrorism is rooted in the moral problem. This results from wrongly focusing on the '-ism' of terrorism. The term's pejorative undertone misleadingly suggests that the phenomenon in its purest form must be abhorrent, irrational, and immoral. It is therefore convenient to isolate this imaginary pure form, condemn it unequivocally, and then claim to study its somewhat placid auxiliary variants. It must be pointed out here that the problem is not with the notion of pure terrorism itself. Of course if terrorism exists, so must real terrorism. The problem is with the sham characterization of real terrorism that contradicts our most basic and fundamental understanding of terrorism itself.

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<sup>65</sup> It is important to point out here that the lack of academic patronage here refers to serious commentators and longstanding traditions in the field of terrorism studies. Many other scholars, especially since the end of cold war do support and promote an ideological understanding of terrorism. This however is part of wider 'new terrorism' debate, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Now if there is no real terrorism then it means that terrorism must only exist in the auxiliary sense. This purely auxiliary existence of terrorism does not cause a setback to our understanding of the problem. In fact as pointed out in the beginning of the chapter, most academics view terrorism as a tactic, method or strategy. Although there is no clear understanding of what this tactic really is and how it is different from a terrorist strategy. What is needed therefore is proper understanding of terrorism as a tactic or strategy and that is what this chapter has attempted to do.

If terrorism exists only in the auxiliary sense and is independent of the actor then what does that mean for the actors that utilize it? Can anyone who utilizes terroristic violence be a terrorist? Crenshaw believes that 'the identity of the actor does not matter to the specification of the method' and therefore finds the term 'terrorist organization' contentious, although she admits to using it herself (2011: 4). However, as I shall explain, it need not be contentious or even difficult to label an actor a terrorist.<sup>66</sup> The key is to understand the difference between tactical and strategic use of terrorism.

The confusion over labelling an actor terrorist is because most academics generally fail to distinguish between tactical and strategic use of terrorism. The tactical use of terrorism only entails coercive intimidation through the use or threat of violence. It can therefore be sporadically utilized when an actor feels the need to send a message and coerce a target audience, or simply to take advantage of the short-term benefits terrorism offers. This means that guerrillas and insurgents that are normally restrictive and predictive in their use of terroristic violence may tactically utilize it to achieve certain goals. State actors in a similar fashion can also utilize terrorism tactically in their otherwise conventional engagement with both state and non-state actors.

Strategic terrorism, on the other hand, is protracted, asymmetric, clandestine, and coercive. The use of terroristic violence is frequent, expected, and predictable. And as it is also independent of the actor, both states and non-state actors may utilize it.

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<sup>66</sup> Although I agree with Crenshaw that labelling someone terrorist is deeply problematic and should ideally be avoided (2011: 4), the practice however is widely pervasive and will continue to persist regardless. Given this inevitability and the plethora of problems it creates, it will be more helpful to try and resolve it than ignore it.

However, since strategic terrorism by nature is essentially asymmetric, actors cannot utilize it against opponents that it is at par with.

Hence, it is postulated here that actors utilizing terrorism tactically cannot and should not be called terrorist and only those employing terrorism strategically should be labelled terrorist properly. In the academic discourse, the confusion over labelling an actor terrorist generally arises because of the tactical use of terrorism. There is usually very little confusion or disagreement when an actor utilizes terrorism strategically. The model presented here is therefore broadly consistent with the general academic classification of different terrorist actors. This will become clearer with a few practical examples.

Conor Gearty in his book *Terror* asks whether groups like Tupamaros and Montoneros should even be considered terrorist ‘in the strict sense of the word’, as ‘They emerged from an intellectual tradition that borrowed from Lenin, the rural guerrilla theories of Mao and the foco ideas of Debray and Guevara, none of whom could properly be called terrorist’ (1992: 44). However, Gearty also points out that both these two organizations, especially at a later stage, ‘came close to that arbitrariness in the application of force which we recognize as terror’ (Ibid). On the other hand, Gearty has no such hesitation in labelling the Tamil Tigers as terrorists even though he also acknowledges it as a guerrilla force (p. 102). Why is it then that Gearty sees guerrilla movements like Tupamaros, Montoneros, and Tamil Tigers in different light when all of these organizations utilize terroristic violence?

Gearty and many other scholars who maintain such a position, may argue that this apparent contradiction in terms can be explained by the logic of frequency i.e. the more the frequency of terroristic violence, the more likely the actor will be called a terrorist. And since the Tamil Tigers used terroristic violence far more frequently than Tupamaros and Montoneros, they should therefore be called terrorist. This logic of frequency though is of little help or analytical utility.

A thorough analysis of the three groups shows that where Tupamaros and Montoneros utilized terrorism tactically, the Tamil Tigers made strategic use of it. As Weinberg notes ‘the LTTE ‘Black Tigers’ carried out terrorist attacks throughout the conflict’ (2012: 76). Terroristic violence was in fact the most outstanding characteristic of the Tamil movement. The Tamil Tigers should therefore be labeled terrorist properly,

whereas Tupamaros and Montoneros can be regarded as guerilla movements that utilized terrorism tactically. It can also be observed here that strategic terrorism also incorporates the frequency element and therefore does not contradict what many scholars already suggest. Instead the tactical and strategic categorization provides a richer and more comprehensive tool for labelling an actor terrorist.

MNLF and MILF in the Philippines are generally treated as insurgent/guerrilla groups, though they are often charged with utilizing terrorist tactics. The Abu Sayyaf group (ASG), on the other hand, is largely viewed as a terrorist group. Alfredo Filler, for instance, views both MILF and MORO as insurgencies and believes that in comparison 'the ASG by its nature and activities is a contemporary terrorist organization' (2002: 142). Chalk also views MILF and MORO as guerrillas and insurgents and points out that 'in terms of revolutionary political violence, virtually all of ASG's activities are terroristic in nature' (2001: 248). The reason why both MNLF and MILF are largely viewed as insurgent or guerrilla movements is because they utilize terrorist tactics as opposed to a terrorist strategy. On the other hand, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), also operating in Philippines and for similar political goals as MNLF and MORO, utilizes terrorist strategy and is therefore widely regarded as a terrorist group.

The infamous Al-Qaeda organization, which is often treated as a benchmark terrorist group, can also be explained by the logic sketched here. Al-Qaeda is a rational actor with certain political objectives (no matter how outlandish). The organization is clearly locked in a protracted asymmetric struggle and primarily utilizes terroristic violence. The group's use of terroristic violence is frequent and predictable. Hence, the group utilizes strategic terrorism and can therefore rightly be categorized as a terrorist organization. Similarly, the 17N group in Greece was engaged in a protracted clandestine asymmetrical conflict with the state for decades. The actors were clearly rational and were trying to communicate their political message through violence (Kassimeris, 2013). The group therefore, because of its strategic use of terrorism, can easily be categorized as a terrorist group. In comparison, Hezbollah can be seen as a guerrilla group that sometimes uses terrorist tactics. Various other non-state groups such as the IRA and the PKK will also be viewed as insurgents or rebel groups that utilize terrorism tactically and are therefore not terrorists per se.



In similar vein, a choice between a tactic and strategy can determine how a state should be labelled. As the terrorist strategy demands asymmetry, therefore a state cannot practice it during wars with other states though it may still utilize terrorism tactically against other states. Since a tactical use of terrorism is not sufficient to label an actor terrorist, therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Allies, despite their terrorist tactics were not labelled as terrorist during WWII. Although Nazi Germany was designated a terrorist state, it was not because of its military engagement with the Allies (or its tactical use of terrorism) but because of its strategic use of terrorism in asymmetrical conflict areas, which were under its control, such as Greece (Kalyvas, 2004). During conventional wars, therefore, states normally use terrorism only tactically against each other. Hence, a state typically is not labelled terrorist when it is fighting another state.

States can only be labelled terrorist properly when they utilize strategic terrorism against non-state actors or their own citizenry. The current Syrian state under Bashar Al Assad is an example of a terrorist state. States may also utilize terrorist tactics against their own citizenry but because of tactical use will not be labelled terrorist. The Egyptian state under President Hosni Mubarak provides a good example of such tactical use of terrorism by a state.

The model suggested here also accounts for 'lone wolf terrorism'. A lone wolf act of terrorism is always clandestine, politically motivated, asymmetrical, and intends to send a message to a certain target audience, which is in line with the strategic logic of terrorism. The problem is that it appears to be not protracted, as the individuals do not belong to any specific organization. However, the individuals who commit these acts see themselves as part of a wider political movement and their grievances are more than often in line with known terrorist organizations or radical movements (See e.g. Spaaij, 2010: 857).

Hence, although lone wolf terrorism may give the impression that it is not protracted, the perpetrators view themselves as part of a wider protracted struggle and the wider society or the target audience also views or treats their actions as such. The July 2016 lone wolf truck attack in Nice, France is a case in point. The attacker that killed 86 people identified with the radical Islamist group ISIS, which is widely regarded as a terrorist group (Gunaratna, 2016). Thus, since the rationale of lone wolf terrorism is in

line with strategic terrorism, the perpetrators can in most of the cases comfortably be labelled terrorists.

Terrorism will crop up whenever noncombatants are targets of political violence, be it in conventional wars, insurgencies, or rebellions. Terrorism does not have a separate or freestanding existence and will always be adopted either as a tactic or a strategy in other forms of violence. Owing to its auxiliary existence, debate in the terrorism discourse often stalls over who should be labelled terrorist properly. However, as this discussion has shown, this need not be so. Understandably academics are generally weary of labelling an actor terrorist because of the pejorative undertone of the term that misleadingly gestures towards an unqualified pure terrorism. But if this 'pure terrorism' does not exist then terrorism need not be weighed against an abhorrent, irrational, and immoral form of violence. The longstanding auxiliary view of terrorism may in fact be the only view of it. And pure terrorism could well be reclassified as strategic terrorism (since strategic terrorism corresponds to the complete utilization of terrorism). Terrorism is not a way of life, it is a tool independent of the actor that can be used either tactically or strategically. And a choice between the two can determine how an actor should be labelled.

## 6. Classic, Extreme, and Critical: The Three Academic Positions

Over the course of this work it has become obvious that terrorism is a deeply contested term. This however is not to say that the problem of terrorism is beyond apprehension. On the contrary, this observation in fact is more a criticism of the divided academic scholarship than terrorism itself. Terrorism, indeed is complex, multifaceted, and above all defies not only the existing categories and classification but also prevailing logic and reason. Even so, its understanding, as a matter of fact, is largely incapacitated by the competing, conflicting, contradictory, and often confusing academic positions.

Given this predicament, the concluding task must therefore be to set out a criterion whereby these divergent academic positions can be reasonably structured and standardized. Amidst the range of problems that beset the scholarship, such an undertaking certainly appears impractical and unlikely. However, it is worth remembering here that all the major themes and issues discussed so far in this thesis, clearly also outline the underlying academic leanings, preferences, and dispositions. It should therefore be possible to discern some general pattern in our overall analysis and put forth at least a basic model that helps better contextualize the academic scholarship.

In light of our fairly exhaustive analysis of all the major characteristics of terrorism (and also keeping broadly in line with the customary understanding of the discourse), I shall propose that the terrorism scholarship can be better understood by means of the following three academic positions: the *classic orthodox*, the *extreme orthodox*, and the *critical* position. The classic and the extreme orthodox positions originate from within the orthodox or traditional discourse on terrorism and are therefore named as such. The critical position on the other hand (although clearly discernable in both early and contemporary orthodox writings as well), came to prominence after the launch of the journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism* in 2008 with a vociferously expressed critical agenda and is thus named accordingly. This academic categorization primarily embodies the prevailing moral or ethical preferences of

scholars studying terrorism and for that reason corresponds directly to the moral continuum that was discussed in chapter 2.

Out of the three categories, the critical and the extreme orthodox positions can be said to characterize the two opposing viewpoints on the moral continuum- moral and amoral respectively. This means that the extreme orthodox position essentially views terrorism as inherently evil and morally unjustifiable, whereas the critical position not only argues strongly against the inherent evilness of terrorism but also grants it the necessary justificatory space. Uncompromising and unyielding in their respective moral stances, both these two extremes have long been at loggerheads with each other. The third position, the classic orthodox, on the other hand can be regarded as the long-standing foundational position that does not take an extreme moral viewpoint and sits roughly in between the two extremes, sharing certain common elements with both. This position especially of late is often overshadowed by the more visible and dramatic extreme orthodox and critical positions.

Although these three categories are not divided along any specific timelines, a certain position tends to be more dominant than others at any given time. The dominance of a certain position does not however mean that other positions simply disappear or have little or no relevance. Instead it only suggests that the other positions are either largely overshadowed or become somewhat secondary in importance. Additionally and perhaps also more importantly, it also entails that a dominant position has the potential to seep into and profoundly influence other positions.

Before we discuss this any further, it must be pointed out at the outset that these three categories are not entirely exclusive as there is significant overlap between them. Scholars often tend to oscillate between these different positions and are not necessarily tied down to one particular approach. Even though some academics do strictly hold on to their predispositions (especially critical scholars), many still can be swayed otherwise (or at least influenced) by the dominant position. Nevertheless, this overlap does not repudiate or invalidate these positions, as a clear divide within the terrorism scholarship does in fact exist. Other than the divergent and conflicting academic viewpoints that have surfaced over the course of this discussion, the very emergence of the critical studies on terrorism with its agenda to challenge the dominant discourse is a direct proof of such a divide.

In terms of dominance, the classic orthodox, as the long-standing and the oldest of the three positions, was clearly dominant up until the early 1980s when the field of terrorism studies was still in its infancy. Gradually however, the extreme orthodox position gained ground and in due course took over as the dominant position in the early 1990s and held that stature for almost two decades. As the extreme orthodox position characterizes one of the extreme moral viewpoints, its dominance subsequently triggered a sharp critical response from the other end of the moral continuum.

With terrorism being essentially political, the relative support each position draws therefore also depends considerably on the corresponding political events of the time. The prevailing political circumstances continually not only influence academic ideas and beliefs but also tend to dictate their relevance and appeal. This means that the dominance of a certain position is often largely determined by the political zeitgeist of the time. This strong correlation not only explains the relative sway each position commands at any given time, but as this discussion shall demonstrate, also significantly helps in outlining their essential features and characteristics.

### **Classic Orthodox Position**

Soon after the Second World War, the world witnessed a rapid decline in inter-state conflicts and a mushroom growth of insurrectional violence in the form of nationalist and anti-colonial struggles. This shift encouraged the study of resistance movements and intrastate state conflicts, which subsequently led to a discourse on insurgency, guerrilla warfare and other similar forms of violent resistances.<sup>67</sup> Since this discourse primarily viewed violence in the broader context of nationalism, self-determination, and anti-colonialism, most of the commentators adopted either a neutral or sometimes even a sympathetic moral attitude towards their object of study (although such moral considerations were typically reserved for only non-state actors). The insurgents,

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<sup>67</sup> This is of course not to say that the state was no longer an object of study. In fact violence by states was deemed equally if not more important (See Walter, 1969). Instead, this is merely to point out that the academic focus shifted from state on state violence to intrastate violence that involved both state and non-state actors. Taking cue from Stampnitzky (2013), I will call this discourse as insurgency discourse.

guerrillas, or rebels were largely viewed as rational actors that had well defined political objectives.

In other words, the new insurgency discourse never viewed the actors or their actions in complete isolation and most importantly it never doubted the political intent and rationality of the actors, as Thornton assertively states, 'We shall treat terror as a tool to be used rationally' (1964: 71). The actors were thus not defined or confined by their identity and a mere allusion to the category of insurgent or rebel would concomitantly raise the question of context and perspective. Terrorism was merely seen as one of the means utilized to achieve an end. David Galula, Thomas Thornton, Brian Crozier, Richard Clutterbuck, Eugene Walter, and Ted Gurr can be regarded as the earliest protagonists of the insurgency discourse. It is from this discourse that the study of terrorism ultimately emerged.

During the formative years of the insurgency discourse, references to terrorism were often few and far between. Both the act and the activity of terrorism were largely treated independent of the actor. The terms terror and terrorism were mostly used to describe certain activities that an actor would take up for some tactical advantage. This tactic or the method of terrorism was primarily understood in terms of generating fear or some psychological impact, which shows that the term terrorism was more often used in a literal sense. This partly also explains why the use of the word terror was more common than terrorism during this period. Lisa Stampnitzky in her thought provoking book *Disciplining Terror* has also made a similar observation. She points out that 'Although the terms terror (and less often terrorism) did sometimes appear within the counterinsurgency literature, these were generally treated as a tactic or tool, and not as the defining feature of individual or group identity' (2013: 52).

By the 1970s a technological revolution in mass media was underway as satellite communication and live broadcasting was beginning to provide an easy and direct access to news around the globe. One of the most outstanding effects of terrorism, as we know, is publicity and effective newsmaking, as Groom notes, '... terrorism is news and that is one of its *raison d'être*' (1978: 62). Hence, just as television sets became everyday household items, terrorism with its potential to generate fear and influence psychologically, began to draw attention of audiences on an unprecedented scale. This among other things allowed terrorism to capture headlines around the

globe and also greatly enhanced the popularity of terrorism as a cost-effective mean to an end.

Since the tactic of terrorism due to its psychological ingredient and dramatic nature was deemed highly newsworthy, the media often conveniently focused more (or entirely) on the act than the wider conflict it was part of. This disproportionate attention subsequently transformed the importance and significance of terrorism both in relation to the movement it was part of and in terms of its wider impact on the society.

This attention and impact, despite being disproportionate, demanded immediate academic attention, not only due to the growing popularity but also because of the inability of the wider society to comprehend the frequently isolated act of terrorism that was increasingly becoming more visible than the wider context it was part of. Thus, the tactic of terrorism from being on the periphery of the insurgency discourse eventually ended up taking the centre stage. And with the launch of the foundational core journal *Terrorism: An International Journal* (later *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*) in the late 1970s, terrorism formally emerged as a discourse in its own right.

The rise of terrorism scholarship therefore can in large part be attributed to the revolution in mass media that made the tactic of terrorism more visible and larger than the context it existed in. Where this undue attention encouraged independent study of terrorism, it also in the process often divorced terrorism from its socio-political context. Although this severance was largely unintentional and driven primarily by a desire for profits (as will become evident over the course of this discussion), it proved to have an enduring and detrimental effect on not only the perception but also the study of terrorism in the long run.

Here one must also acknowledge the role of growing insurgencies and civil wars during this period that frequently resorted to terrorism because of the tactical and strategic benefits it offered.<sup>68</sup> Given that inter-state wars were in decline, the attention

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<sup>68</sup> It is important to remember here that a reference to insurgency and civil wars does not presuppose the actor to be non-state, as any reference to insurgency, guerrilla warfare, or civil wars, as a rule also involves state actors.

accorded to terrorism as the most visible and dramatic feature of intrastate conflict is understandable. Even though terrorism was mostly employed sporadically and was largely dwarfed by other forms of violence both in terms of its frequency and casualties, it still stood out prominently due to its ability to grab headlines and capture public imagination.

As the field of terrorism studies emerged from the study of insurgency and civil wars, it carried with it some remnants that were clearly characteristic of the preceding discourse. The characteristics that were assigned to terrorism were broadly in line with features that had long been associated with insurgents, guerrillas, or even repressive states. Thus, just like insurgency or guerrilla warfare, terrorism was first and foremost understood to be political and the actors engaged in the activity were largely believed to be rational. Both understood terrorism (or terror) primarily as a fear generating and psychologically influencing method or tactic that was largely independent of the actor.

Thus, although the terrorism discourse by now had formally emerged as an independent field of inquiry, it still continued to study and observe terrorism just as the insurgency discourse did. For instance, even though the first few issues of the founding journal *Terrorism* focused on some conceptual and theoretical aspects of the term (See e.g. Jenkins, 1978; Lasswell, 1978; Merari, 1978, Knutson, 1980), a large number of articles engaged primarily with the ongoing insurgencies, including different left and right wing revolutionary struggles that were particularly characteristic of this era (See e.g. Whetten, 1978; Pisano, 1979; Anderson, 1980, Tugwell, 1981; Gregory, 1981). Thus, other than some very elementary conceptual work, little changed in the new scholarship. Terrorism was still very much entangled in its socio-political context and its so-called new study was little if at all any different.

This is of course not to say that terrorism was not given any special importance, but instead to point out that there was no remarkable shift in the new discourse, which for the most part continued to deal with the same post-colonial problems. Terrorism was still largely viewed and studied in the broader context of insurgencies and revolutionary movements, just as it was in the preceding discourse. Moreover, there was also no noticeable change in the general understanding of terrorism. The



characteristics that were associated with terrorism in the insurgency discourse continued to shape and dominate the conceptual understanding of the nascent field.

There are a number of factors that can help explain this continuity. Firstly, terrorism studies emerged from within the insurgency discourse and therefore it is understandable that it would also inherit some of its most fundamental tenets. Secondly, the emergence of the field, though somewhat sudden, was neither revolutionary nor reactionary, which allowed it to both value and absorb many of the preexisting traditions. Thirdly, there was no new breed of scholars that initiated and spearheaded the field. Most of its leading protagonists were trained in the preceding discourse and had been working on revolutionary and sub-revolutionary cultures or movements within the broader field of insurgency and irregular warfare.<sup>69</sup>

Lastly, and also most importantly, the transition from insurgency to terrorism discourse was more out of terrorism's growing popularity (because of the disproportionate attention it started receiving from media) than any real or perceptible change on ground. Hence, when academics set about to isolate and diagnose the problem, there was hardly anything new, distinct or unique about terrorism, at least not in a manner that demanded or necessitated a separate or new field of inquiry. Terrorism, therefore, for a brief period of time continued to be observed and studied in virtually the same manner.

However, in spite of all these similarities between the two discourses, there appears to be one small difference. Although the early terrorism discourse strongly advocated actor neutrality and saw terrorism as a tactic that could equally be employed by both state and non-state actors, the new research agenda happened to be largely non-state centric. There are several reasons for this deliberate neglect and most of them have already been discussed earlier. Nevertheless, within the specific context of the emerging terrorism discourse, it is important to point out a number of additional factors.

It was, as we know, the advent of media and mass communication that changed the popular perception about both the importance and uniqueness of terrorism and

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<sup>69</sup> For instance, Martha Crenshaw, one of the earliest and most influential scholars in the field, started her academic career as an expert on the Algerian civil war (See Crenshaw, 2011).

subsequently also prompted a formal academic inquiry into the matter. Yet it is important to note that media's hype over terrorism was essentially in response to non-state acts of terrorism (which also includes state sponsored acts of terrorism) and not state terrorism. Mass media in fact played a very crucial role in ultimately shaping the non-state inference and perception of the term terrorism.

Due to their control over the media apparatus, states on the other hand were able to often censor their involvement to wider audiences and channel it through to their select target instead. Non-state actors, in comparison, generally did not hold any sway over media and could therefore not control or influence the flow of information the way states could. This non-interference gave media outlets the license to report the act in a manner that most suited their profit driven interests. As a result, the terrorism attributed to non-state actors was not filtered for a select audience and was routinely broadcasted to any and all audiences across the globe. This unfiltered global transmission, as opposed to censored state terrorism, contributed greatly to the popular non-state inference of the term terrorism.

Moreover, we also know that state actors generally do not take responsibility for their actions in the manner non-state actors normally do and a responsibility is generally attributed to them indirectly. Although from an academic standpoint an indirect responsibility should not be treated any differently from direct responsibility, for promotional and newsmaking purposes however, direct responsibility is often indispensable. For if the identity of the perpetrator is suspect or if an act is not attributed at all, then it could simply disappear from public consciousness and will not have the same shock and awe value. Therefore, even if state terrorism is clearly visible, it will still never get the same level of media attention as non-state terrorism. Wardlaw similarly observes, 'When terrorism becomes institutionalized as a form of government it makes the headlines less often' (1989: 11).

Additionally, there were also some serious practical considerations that prevented scholars from doing little more than occasionally acknowledging state terrorism. Given that states openly denied any responsibility, the growing international norms and practices made it exceedingly difficult to implicate them in any meaningful way. Raising accusatory fingers at states amid their public denial were routinely shunned as acts of political bias. The politicizing of the term terrorism made it increasingly

difficult to study state terrorism in an analytically rigorous manner.<sup>70</sup> It especially made it difficult for academics to implicate any of the existing states. As a result, any references to state terrorism were either hypothetical or historical. For instance, in a discussion on state terrorism, it became an exceedingly common practice to refer to either the Nazi or the Stalin era or both as leading examples of state terrorism (See e.g. Wilkinson, 1974; Laqueur, 1977). This was clearly because references such as these were deemed safe as they would not invite any criticism or provoke any backlash from academic or political circles.

The problem of state neglect was further aggravated because of the difficulties and perils of conducting research on state terrorism. Due to state censorship of its activities, it was deemed incredibly hard to collect any data and field research of any kind was almost non-existent. As Groom pointed out, ‘... it is dangerous to conduct field research in contemporary regimes of terror. It is far easier to conceptualize the use of terror as a weapon to achieve a specific goal rather than as a form of regular and normal government’ (1978: 62). In the absence of primary research and reliable data, it was therefore somewhat convenient to mention state terrorism only in passing without actually engaging with the problem.

Lastly, academic research of any kind often tends to rely heavily on government or state funding. Researches funded this way, even if not forced, may still have to take into consideration the political leanings and preferences of their respective governments. Even if officially funded researches were not completely state directed, they could still be heavily influenced. In other words, the political biases held by a state were frequently reflected in all such state sponsored researches. While explaining why researchers have failed to hold liberal democracies accountable for their terrorism, Ruth Blakeley explains, ‘The close links between liberal democratic governments and academics undertaking such research have nevertheless impacted on the field of terrorism studies, in that they further privilege work on threats by non-

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<sup>70</sup> This is not to say that the rhetorical use of the term would apply differently to non-state actors. Although clearly there has always been a degree of difference as states due to their privileged power position, sway over media, and international norms can both exploit and avoid the rhetoric better than non-state actors. However, this observation is in relation to taking active responsibility for one’s actions, which state actors regularly do not.

state actors against democratic states and their interests, and marginalize work that examines the complicity of those states in terrorism' (2008: 158).<sup>71</sup>

All of these problems associated with state terrorism subsequently culminated in an unaccredited yet widely pervasive practice of state neglect.<sup>72</sup> This practice, though undesirable and unintended, over time became somewhat characteristic of the new discourse. Admittedly, the discourse consistently advocated actor neutrality and remained fairly critical of the notion of state terrorism, yet it failed to actively engage with the problem in any rigorous sense. Almost all references and allusions to state terrorism were either hypothetical or historical that clearly lacked any meaningful content and substance. As a result, it inadvertently promoted a research agenda that was almost entirely non-state centric.

However, before drawing any final conclusions about this, it is important to point out that the tendency to focus primarily or almost entirely on non-state actors was not a deliberate or conscious decision by the emerging terrorism scholarship. Instead, it was part of a broader evolving tradition in the insurgency discourse that was itself gradually becoming more and more non-state centric. Leading scholars in the field of insurgency, such as Galula, Crozier, Clutterbuck, and Gurr, had principally focused on non-state actors in their analysis of insurgencies and irregular warfare. In fact, the main difference between their work and the terrorism scholarship was essentially only in terms of importance given to the terrorism tactic.

Reasons for the prevalence of non-state centrality in the insurgency discourse are not very different from the ones that have already been discussed in relation to terrorism scholarship. What is important to note is that even though mass media and rise of intrastate conflicts (the two overarching features responsible for the non-state centric shift) certainly broadened and heightened both in importance and scope over time and

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<sup>71</sup> Most of the reasons provided for 'state neglect' clearly apply today as well. This is mainly to show that the trends that are often observed today, especially in critical scholarship, are not entirely new and can be traced back to the time when terrorism scholarship first emerged.

<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that here state neglect is not the same as state exceptionalism. Where state exceptionalism reflects the non-state centric position, which argues that states cannot practice terrorism by virtue of their nature, state neglect is an active failure to engage with state terrorism especially while positing that terrorism is independent of the actor.

ultimately paved the way for terrorism scholarship, they were still very much characteristic of the post-WWII era when the insurgency discourse first emerged.

This comparison to an extent seems unjustified as the insurgency discourse focused primarily on intrastate conflicts and had very little to say about terrorism. However, just as terrorism studies initially claimed to be independent of the actor, the insurgency discourse also never downplayed the role or the participation of a state in an insurgency. Yet due to reason discussed already, both adopted a somewhat non-state centric approach to the problem. Moreover, given the close affinity between the two fields of study, it was important to understand that the non-state centric approach is not unique or new to terrorism scholarship but in fact follows an evolutionary trajectory that can be traced back to its predecessor discourse.

The insurgency discourse thus had an immense impact on the nascent field of terrorism studies. Not only was there a visible continuity in content and context, but there was also no real change in the overall focus of research. Most importantly, the two shared a common understanding of terrorism, as it was believed to be a fear generating rational political method or tactic. Terrorism was primarily regarded as a mean to an end. And in spite of their shared non-state centricity, both were also very strong advocates of observing actor neutrality.

Treating terrorism as a rational political activity in and of itself suggested that terrorism was never divorced from its socio-political context and was never viewed in isolation. This outlook subsequently also determined the moral attitude towards terrorism. It is important to remember here that this understanding of terrorism developed at a time when most of the ongoing intrastate conflicts were viewed through the post-WWII lens of nationalism and anti-colonialism. Therefore, not only were these conflicts generally viewed in a positive light, but there was also widespread sympathy for various non-state actors that were evidently resisting subjugation and fighting for their right of self-determination. Since terrorism was viewed as a tactic that was often employed by these resistance and revolutionary movements, it was not only believed to be rational and political but many commentators also granted it the necessary justificatory space.

Hence, viewing terrorism in the broader socio-political context of nationalism and anti-colonialism allowed moral judgments to be contextual rather than predetermined.

Academics in particular were not predisposed to arrive at some fated moral conclusions. This is of course not to say that the activity of terrorism was not condemned. In fact terrorism was routinely and almost unequivocally condemned, its justification however, was believed to be circumstantial and therefore a different matter altogether.

Although terrorism was granted this justificatory provision by both the discourses, the terrorism scholarship was understandably a touch more conservative than the insurgency discourse. This is because the insurgency discourse clearly had a much broader research agenda and focused on the wider aspects of conflicts. Terrorism was but one small factor among a myriad of others. Due to this lack of attention to terrorism specifically, any judgments related to it were highly contextual and dependent on various other intervening variables. In comparison, the terrorism discourse was terrorism specific (or at least it claimed to be) and for that reason alone it tended to be more guarded in its assessment.

Admittedly, even though the content, context, and focus of the research had not changed in any noticeable manner, the claim alone to exclusively study terrorism- an unquestionably pejorative term- was always going to be difficult and controversial in terms of its moral justification. Thus, where on the one hand the discourse's terrorism specific agenda made moral judgments awkward, there on the other hand its association with the insurgency discourse made similar moral justifications permissible. The result was a muted and sometimes often confusing moral position. A quick survey of the early discourse reveals that moral justifications for terrorism were often only theoretical and as a result were mostly restricted to hypothetical and historical references (See e.g. Wellman, 1979; Coady, 1985).

Use of historical or hypothetical references in place of contemporaneous examples clearly demonstrate the hesitancy of the field regarding moral judgments. Nevertheless, despite this hesitancy, the justificatory provision was still an important and in many ways a defining characteristic of the new terrorism discourse. Even though the provision was essentially theoretical, it was still a vital constituent of the overall conceptual edifice of the new terrorism discourse. Moreover, just like other outstanding attributes of terrorism it too demonstrated continuity and progression of the preceding insurgency scholarship.

The dominant themes during the early years of terrorism scholarship thus continued to reflect the fundamental tenets of the preceding discourse. Although there was some dissension and opposition right from the start, the infancy stage of terrorism scholarship was largely dominated by a position that was shaped and crafted through characteristics acquired from the insurgency discourse. This position though dominant for only a very brief period of time, is extremely important as it not only manifests the foundational understanding of terrorism but also encapsulates the earliest formal academic enquiry into the problem. Since the position developed out of a long tradition that ultimately culminated in the establishment of terrorism discourse, it will be appropriate to refer to it as the classic orthodox position.

### **The Extreme Orthodox Position**

Terrorism scholarship confronted a range of complex issues at the time of its infancy. From finding *raison d'être* for its emergence and continued existence to asserting itself as a new and an independent field of inquiry, the infant discourse was marred with difficulties. The problem was further compounded by the different and conflicting moral positions that failed to either give or permit a clear direction or path to the field of terrorism studies. Unable to gain any suitable direction at the time of its inception, the field instead fragmented and fractured along these deeply entrenched moral lines. With the political element being the least common denominator for terrorist violence, the importance or the dominance of any moral position was largely contingent on the political events of the time.

The political landscape started changing drastically by the mid 1980s. The colonial struggles and the cold war confrontation that had defined the post-WWII era were now coming to an end. In other words, the events that had brought the phenomenon of terrorism to limelight started waning just when a formal enquiry into the subject began. The new political developments also brought new frames of references that encouraged a dormant moral position in the terrorism scholarship to surface and dominate the research agenda. This position challenged many of the conventional wisdoms regarding terrorism and pushed for new and often novel approaches to solve the problem. Before we analyze the essential characteristics of this position, it is important to look at the events that led and contributed to its rise.

During the 1980s many of the anti-colonial struggles and other left and right wing revolutionary movements, that had been characteristic of the post-WWII era, started to run out of steam. Most of these revolutionary movements had either failed (e.g. the Baader Meinhof group) or were assimilated in the political process (e.g. Tupamaros). And the few that were left were simply beginning to lose their appeal (e.g. 17N). The collapse of Soviet Union in particular served a deathblow to various leftwing groups around the globe. This was a turning point in recent history not just in terms of end of the ideological divide between the East and the West, but also in terms of attitude towards revolutionary armed struggles in general.<sup>73</sup>

As pointed out earlier, moral attitudes towards popular resistances, immediately after the Second World War, were overly positive. This is because all intrastate conflicts were generally viewed through an anti-colonial/imperial lens. Revolutionary leaders such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, who openly advocated violent resistance and guerrilla warfare, were revered and glorified all over the world. However, by the time the century drew to a close, the attitude and popular perception began to change. Colonialism and imperialism, in the conventional sense of the term, were considered somewhat dead and a thing of the past. The popularity of revolutionary ideas and the romanticism attached to violent resistance and guerrilla warfare slowly began to wane.

The revolutionary struggles along with the cold war had dominated the global political agenda for a good part of the second half of the twentieth century. As the cold war drew to a close and revolutionary struggles declined steadily, there was no outstanding issue that was grand in its scale and far-reaching in its effect to transcend borders and dominate global agenda.

Traditionally, such omnipresent characteristics have only been associated with issues that were clearly visible and self-evident. The defining spirit or zeitgeist at any given time, in other words, had to be glaringly obvious to take effect (such as the cold war or the two World Wars before that). This, however, changed with the advent of mass media. Through satellite communication and live broadcasting, media was able to

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<sup>73</sup> Such was the magnitude of this event that Francis Fukuyama in his much-celebrated 1989 essay referred to it as ‘the end of history’. Although his remarks were more in reference to the end of Soviet Union and the supposed triumph of the Western values.



reach audiences all across the globe. This meant that even a small and insignificant event could easily become important and well known. Media's pervasiveness, when coupled with an activity that was able to captivate an audience and influence them psychologically, provided just the right ingredients to achieve the scale and effect necessary for an issue to dominate global agenda.

Terrorism had already started generating headlines as early as 1970. The true extent of its capacity to draw large audiences through media first became evident during the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre. On September 5, 1972, members of the Black September Organization, a Palestinian nationalist group, took several Israeli athletes hostage and demanded the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. All Israeli hostages were subsequently killed after a failed police rescue attempt. The drama unfolded at the Olympic stage, which was being broadcasted to a global audience.

This incident is often regarded as the event that ushered the age of modern terrorism. As Stampnitzky observes, '... it was the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics that took on central symbolic significance in the history of terrorism. The events at Munich have been inscribed in popular and expert histories of the problem alike as the spectacular event that inaugurated the era of modern terrorism' (2013: 21).

Interestingly, it was neither the scale of violence nor the number of casualties that made this incident so significant. Instead it was the manner in which the platform of media was utilized to draw attention for a political cause. It was the first time that an act of political violence had deliberately sought media attention in front of an unprecedented audience. The attention and impact it generated, thereupon inspired numerous other disgruntled actors to employ similar tactics to register their political grievance or defiance. It especially encouraged weak non-state actors with limited capabilities to achieve worldwide recognition and attention. The 1972 Munich attacks and the events that followed in its wake, thus paved the way for media incentivized political violence. Such violence (then increasingly referred to as terrorism) would soon become a defining characteristic of the last quarter of the twentieth century, just as the cold war and anti-colonial frames of references were becoming obsolete.

The turn of the century was therefore a pivotal moment for terrorism as the momentous changes during this time had a metamorphic effect on its popular

understanding and perception. Firstly, the attitude towards all forms of revolutionary and violent resistance movements began to change considerably as they were no longer seen as positive signifiers. Secondly, the USSR started to crumble under its own weight and with that all the left-wing movements it supported and inspired also began to recede. Thirdly, and perhaps also most importantly, the phenomenon of terrorism, assisted by media, began to emerge as the most outstanding issue of the time.<sup>74</sup>

The role of mass media in setting the stage for terrorism to transform from a context specific fear-generating tactic to a globally significant phenomenon is unquestionably paramount. Even though terrorism was an extremely cost-effective tool, its over-projection by media ultimately proved to be detrimental to not only its cause and perception but also its study. Driven by profits, mass media had always been more interested in the shock and awe value of terrorism and conveniently therefore focused more on the act than its cause or motive. As the phenomenon of terrorism began to replace the cold war and post-colonial frames of reference, this severance of the violent act from its wider socio-political context went on to determine the dominant research agenda of the terrorism scholarship.

Terrorism studies, as we know, primarily emerged in response to excessive media attention and growing popular sentiments. The importance given to terrorism deceptively suggested that there was something unique or enigmatic about it that demanded immediate attention. Terrorism thereupon became a matter of academic urgency. However, when a formal academic enquiry in the form of terrorism studies was launched, many academics failed to find anything new or distinct. As a result, instead of departing from past trends and charting its own course, the new discipline adopted the same conceptual and theoretical framework as its predecessor discourse.

Over time as the political zeitgeist began to shift in favor of terrorism, the media attention given to the act of terrorism in comparison with its wider context also became increasingly disproportionate. Distancing the act from its socio-political context reinforced the idea that terrorism was fundamentally unique or different from other forms of violence. As the act became increasingly more pronounced than the

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<sup>74</sup> Although this transition did not take place up until the very end of the twentieth century, terrorism had steadily been growing in popularity since the early 1970s.

underlying context, wider perception of terrorism and the actors engaged in it also began to change considerably. Terrorism was now predominantly viewed as immoral, evil, irrational, and devoid of any sensitivity or human emotion. Moral attitude towards terrorism was thus predetermined and was no longer considered a matter of deliberation. As Peter Neumann's assertion demonstrates, 'Terrorism had degenerated into a form of irrational bloodlust which could burst out anywhere for any reason' (2009: 3).

As the scholarly communication with respect to terrorism research has always been an open one (i.e. the flow of information is primarily from external sources such as government documents and media sources) (Gordon, 2011: 116), the growing popular resentment along with media's representation of terrorism, eventually made its way into the field of terrorism studies. Since the field was still in its infancy, this injection prompted the rise of a new and somewhat extreme position that strictly opposed the premise of terrorism scholarship, which it saw as deep-rooted in an outdated and foregone discourse. It found the conventional understanding of terrorism too soft and archaic to account for any of the existing challenges.

Interestingly however, in spite of its strong opposition, the new approach did not reject the classic orthodoxy entirely. Instead, it argued that the classical approach was only applicable to past instances of terrorism. And as the nature of terrorism had since evolved significantly, the traditional understanding of terrorism was no longer deemed relevant. Thus, where the extreme orthodoxy acknowledged that terrorism in the past was rational, calculated, politically motivated, discriminate, and often good and legitimate, there on the other hand it posited that contemporary terrorism was irrational, evil, indiscriminate, and never justifiable under any circumstances. Swayed by popular perception and media projection, it argued that there was something fundamentally different about modern-day terrorism. Classic orthodoxy was believed to be wrong footed and ill equipped to deal with a problem that had transformed completely.

The view that classic orthodoxy was only historically relevant gained significant currency as the new approach became dominant over time. Ironically the charge was led by Laqueur, who is regarded by many academics as the leading historian in the field of terrorism studies. Laqueur points out that 'there is no escaping the fact that

nineteenth century terrorists acted according to standards very different from those prevailing at present... the driving force is hate not love, ethical considerations are a matter of indifference to them, and their dreams of freedom, of national and social liberation, are suspect precisely because of their personalities ' (1977: 132). It was this merging of the terrorist act and the actor into a distinct terrorist identity that would ultimately become a defining characteristic of the new orthodoxy.

By suggesting that terrorism was rational, political, and often justifiable in the past, but irrational, necessarily evil, and unjustifiable in the present, the new orthodoxy not only turned the conventional wisdom regarding terrorism on its head, but also encouraged a contradictory and paradoxical understanding of it. Even though this contradiction was able to thrive because there was no agreed definition or a sound conceptual basis of terrorism, it soon became evident that such a confusing and contradictory edifice would be analytically unsustainable in the long run. Subsequently, the term new terrorism emerged to address this contradiction and distinguish modern-day terrorism from its supposedly distant and in many ways, irrelevant history. The notion of new terrorism and what it represents epitomizes the essential features of the extreme orthodoxy in the discourse.

A range of different terms and expressions began to emerge as the extreme orthodoxy set out to distinguish terrorism in its current manifestation from its somewhat misleading past. Laqueur, for instance, famously used the expression 'post-modern terrorism' (1996) to describe the revolutionary change in terrorism. Glen Schewitzer and Ehud Sprinzak referred to it as 'superterrorism' (1998) and 'hyperterrorism' respectively (2001). Over time however, the term new terrorism gained currency and became the most commonly used expression.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, whether post-modern, super, hyper, or new, all these different prefixes in effect demonstrate attempts to characterize modern-day terrorism as something distinctly and fundamentally different from conventional terrorism. As Kurtulus states 'In the contemporary academic literature, 'new terrorism' refers to a qualitative change in the nature of terrorism, which has allegedly taken place during the 1990s' (2011: 477).

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<sup>75</sup> While the terms used to make the new terrorism distinction have continued to vary greatly, the difference between them to a large extent has been purely terminological (Kurtulus, 2011: 494).

As the notion of new terrorism is essentially a product of strict moral opposition to terrorism, it forwarded a range of assumptions that accentuated terrorism's immorality. Indiscriminate, random, mass destruction, civilian and innocent targeting, are among its most frequently highlighted features. Interestingly, some of these elements have regularly featured in the classic orthodoxy as well. However, where the classic orthodoxy would observe caution and allow for exceptions, the new terrorism discourse instead inflated these attributes and granted no allowance. Thus despite the overlap, there was a visible difference in degree and emphasis.

The biggest point of departure however was not in terms of some distinct characteristic but in the stand out contention that terrorism could no longer be treated as a mean to an end. The new terrorism discourse argued that the recent developments clearly demonstrate that terrorism had transformed from being a mean, to an end in itself. As Mathew Morgan's assertion clearly demonstrates, 'For many violent and radical organizations, terror has evolved from being a mean to an end, to becoming the end in itself' (2004: 30). Treating terrorism as an end in itself was a significant break from the past as it undermined some of its most fundamental and long-standing assumptions in the process.

On the one hand, the suggestion that terrorism was not a mean, effectively ruled out any practical or functional utility of terrorism. On the other hand, its treatment as an end evinced complete lack of political (or for that matter any other) intent. The new terrorism discourse not just encouraged a focus on the act instead of intent and context, but in fact suggested that the act was all there is to terrorism. Although it is true that even the classic orthodoxy had been swayed by the disproportionate attention the act of terrorism received due to its nature, yet it never contested the broader context terrorism was part of. Conversely however, through conflating means and ends, the new terrorism discourse categorically precluded any underlying socio-political context. The phenomenon of terrorism, the actor responsible for it, and the broader context it was part of, were all effectively reduced to just the act of terrorism. Terrorism subsequently was given the characteristics of an ideology (which was briefly discussed in the last chapter). This visible departure from the past thereupon set the tone for future research to follow.

Although new terrorism became popular only in the 1990s, as Mark Juergensmeyer says ‘The last decade of the twentieth century was the decade of the new terrorism’ (2009: 158), the roots of the phenomenon were actively traced back to the events of 1960s and 1970s (See e.g. Neumann, 2009). There are two important reasons for claiming such lineage. First, the methods that were typically associated with modern-day terrorism such as hijacking, hostage taking, mass bombings etc. were believed to have originally erupted on the world stage during this period. Second, most of the terrorist organizations or movements that were deemed characteristic of the new era were either seen as continuation of the groups or events that transpired during this period or were at least thought to have been inspired by them in some way.

Drawing lineage from the events that transpired in the 1960s and 1970s should in principle also suggest that modern-day terrorism in some ways is a variation or continuation of Post-WWII ethno-nationalist and other left and right wing revolutionary struggles. However, a quick survey of the discourse reveals that this is not the case. Far from being ethno-nationalist or left/right wing, new terrorism is believed to be predominantly religious in its motivation and drive (See e.g. Veness, 1999; Pinto, 1999; Dishman, 1999; Raufer, 1999; Schbley, 2004; Etzioni, 2010). The genealogy of new terrorism, traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, is therefore more of a specific reference to a movement during that period than the era as a whole.

As pointed out earlier, the 1972 Munich attack proved to be a watershed event in the recent history of terrorism. It not only inspired weak non-state actors to employ similar means to punch well above their weight, but also brought the Palestinian cause to the wider attention of the world. Although the Palestinian cause was first and foremost nationalistic, there was a visible religious side to it as well that in particular resonated with Muslims around the world who saw it as a vestige of Western Imperialism and a constant reminder of their fall of grace. Downtrodden and demoralized by not just their inferior position in the world but also by the constant political instability and infighting that plagued the entire Muslim world, the Palestine cause in many ways served as an inspiring and unifying factor.<sup>76</sup> Even though the

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<sup>76</sup> The religious significance of Jerusalem, the Muslim-Jewish confrontation, and the American support of Israel are among some of the most outstanding factors that inspired Muslims around the globe.

Palestinian conflict was primarily nationalist, it managed to trigger deep-seated grievances that over time became more and more religious in their outlook.

Hence, in an era where nationalist and left/right wing movements were still dominant, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was perhaps the most standout conflict with an unmistakable religious dimension.<sup>77</sup> And since new terrorism is believed to be primarily religious, its roots can therefore conveniently be traced back to this most significant conflict of the time. Additionally, as the dominant movements of this era gradually lost their appeal and many simply vanished over time, the Palestinian struggle not only continues to exist to this day but has also inspired several parallel and overlapping movements over the years. It is this inspiration both in terms of specification of method and ideology that prompts such historical inferences.

It is important to point out here that this historical reference to the early Palestinian liberation movement does not undermine or neglect other factors that are frequently credited for the rise of Islamic terrorism. Instead, it merely alludes to the somewhat obvious yet often overlooked fact that historical inferences for Islamic terrorism from the events of 1960s and 1970s could only be drawn from the Palestinian liberation movement. This is not only due to the absence of any other major religious movement at that time but also because most of the other factors credited for the rise of Islamic terrorism typically refer to events that transpired much later. Rapoport, for instance, credits the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the beginning of a new Islamic century, and the unprovoked Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, as the three events that were vital for the launch of the fourth wave of terrorism (2001: 61). Although he refers to this fourth wave as the 'religious wave', he concedes that 'Islam is at the heart of the wave' (Ibid). Rapoport's waves of terrorism are particularly crucial for proponents of new terrorism thesis as many take cue from it and even though he never

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<sup>77</sup> While there were certainly other notable Islamist movements at the time (such as the Muslim Brotherhood under Sayyid Qutb in Egypt), they did not enjoy the same level of media and popular attention as the Palestinian conflict. This is because firstly most of them were operating in authoritarian Muslim countries where media was often strictly regulated and so they never received the same level of attention. Secondly, as an internal challenge, they did not present a threat to the wider international community. Thirdly, most of these challenges were homegrown within predominantly Muslim countries, for that reason they did not have the same appeal as the Muslim-Jewish confrontation that particularly resonated with the entire Muslim world and also had a greater publicity value globally.

used the term himself, many still draw comparisons between his fourth wave of religious terrorism and the religiously inspired new terrorism (See for e.g. Kurtulus, 2011).

Nevertheless, where Rapoport's fourth wave can be interpreted as new terrorism, his third wave can be seen as setting the tone for religiously inspired new terrorism. In his analysis of the third wave which he believes began in the early 1970s, Rapoport refers to groups like Viet Cong, the American Weather Underground, Red Army Faction, the Italian Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army, the Irish Republican Army, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Where his analysis clearly reveals that nationalist and left/right wing movements were still visibly dominant at this time, the PLO (despite being primarily nationalistic) was the only group that had a pronounced religious dimension to its conflict and as other movements subsequently disappeared, the Palestinian liberation struggle continued to inspire new movements in its wake (2001: 56-61).

Thus, the Palestinian liberation struggle that began soon after the Second World War and came to worldwide attention during the 1972 Munich attack can be regarded as an antecedent to modern-day religious or (to be more precise) Islamic inspired terrorism.<sup>78</sup> On the one hand, it directly inspired local movements specific to the Palestinian cause such as Hezbollah and Hamas and on the other hand it served as an indirect inspiration for transnational organizations with wide-ranging objectives such as Al-Qaeda.<sup>79</sup> Where the local groups were often at the centre of terrorism research in the early 1980s, the transnational groups became overly dominant in the discourse from 1990s onwards. This progression from the locally inspired to transnational organizations formally marks the arrival of new terrorism.

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<sup>78</sup> Although new terrorism is described as religiously inspired, its genealogical references to the 1960s and 1970s clearly show that it draws its lineage from only Islamic inspired acts of terrorism. Moreover, references to religions other than Islam are almost non-existent in the new terrorism discourse. To refer to new terrorism as religiously inspired, though not inaccurate, is therefore unnecessarily generic and also somewhat misleading. Instead, Islamic inspired terrorism will perhaps be a more accurate description of the new terrorism thesis.

<sup>79</sup> Where the inspiration for Hamas and Hezbollah is clearly straightforward, transnational organizations like Al-Qaeda have also vocally expressed their support for the Palestinian cause (See e.g. Byman, 2003; Mendelsohn, 2009)



Although initially inspired by the Palestinian cause, it is believed that many of the religiously motivated organizations eventually moved away from it. This shift became more pronounced as the local Palestinian groups were superseded by transnational Islamic terrorist organizations that had a range of different objectives. As Juergensmeyer asserts ‘The new terrorism emerged in the 1980s from more traditional forms of political conflict in the Middle East. Gradually, along with pro-Palestinian acts of political violence, new strands of strident Muslim terrorism began to appear that were unrelated to the Palestinian or any other definable political cause’ (2009: 158). Similarly, Veness suggests that ‘especially in 1990s, terrorism appears to have changed more than it ever has since the contemporary ‘re-birth’ of terrorism in the 1960s’ (1999: 8).

It is important to point out here that this historical reference, despite being very narrow and specific, is neither commonly treated as a benchmark nor even necessarily seen as a precedent. Instead, it is only intended to vaguely explain the evolutionary trajectory of new terrorism- in terms of its method and ideological motivation. Despite its somewhat loose lineage, new terrorism is believed to be both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the terrorism of 1960s and 1970s and not just terrorism prior to that (See e.g. Morgan, 2004; Kurtulus, 2011). Thus, even though the hijacking, kidnapping, and bombing along with Islamic inspired terrorism was first systematically observed in the 1960s and 1970s, there are supposedly two fundamental differences that sets it apart from new terrorism. First, despite involving similar forms of tactical methods, old terrorism was not entirely indiscriminate, at least not in the manner new terrorism was thought out to be. Second, the objectives of the groups were mainly nationalistic and only secondarily religious as opposed to new groups that were deemed to be first and foremost religiously inspired.

As discussed in chapter 2, the indiscriminate factor is generally understood in terms of terrorism’s unpredictability and failure to distinguish between combatant and noncombatant or guilty and innocent. Despite this however, terrorism before the advent of new terrorism was expected to abide by some basic guidelines and standard rules of engagement. Terrorism in a sense was believed to be somewhat *selectively indiscriminate*.

The general idea is that if terrorism is a rational political activity then it will be goal driven and careful in its selection of target and method of violence even if it is ultimately indiscriminate. This is because targets and methods that would draw intense criticism and alienate the intended audience entirely would prove to be detrimental to the group and its cause. Jeanne Knutson, while outlining some implicit rules of the terrorist game, points out that the terrorists, as rational political actors are usually wary of a maximum and minimum threshold of violence that is to be inflicted. If the violence is too low then it will fail to gain any attention and if it is too high then it will result in an undesirable backlash (1980: 206).

Thus, certain targets, methods, and thresholds have conventionally been off-limits for terrorism. In terms of its direct targets, terrorism was not expected to target places like hospitals, schools, retirement homes etc. With regard to its choice of methods, it was presumed that terrorism would not use unconventional weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. Lastly, in respect of threshold, terrorism was expected to observe some form of restraint and not cause mass casualties. In other words, terrorism, when rational and political, could still be indiscriminate as long as it was conservative in its target selection, *modus operandi*, and level of intensity.

The advent of new terrorism, however, purportedly altered this longstanding perception regarding terrorism. Believed to be neither rational nor political, new terrorism was not bound by any conventional guidelines or rules of engagement. In fact, it was understood to have categorically broken all erstwhile practices including implicit rules regarding selective indiscriminate targeting. Accordingly, new terrorism was declared to be rash in its target selection, audacious in choice of method, and unrestrained in its intensity. Terrorism was now totally and unreservedly indiscriminate.

The shift from selective to *total indiscrimination* is usually seen as an ineluctable side effect of the move from rational and political terrorism to religiously inspired new terrorism. It will, however, be erroneous to make such a putative assumption without taking account of the underlying factors and the corresponding events of the time. Since terrorism allegedly made the shift to total indiscrimination in the 1990s, it is important therefore to look at some of the major events and developments of the time that may have prompted such a transition.

With the collapse of USSR in early 1990s, the cold war confrontation, which had shaped global politics and dominated news agenda for almost half a century came to an abrupt end. As wars and direct confrontations between states became increasingly uncommon, terrorism propped up by media and its own innate ability to draw large audiences, became the most visible form of violence. Since media actively focused on the act rather than the context of terrorism, the most visible form of violence also became one of the most loathed. This moral opposition was further augmented by the change in perceptions regarding all forms of revolutionary and subversive struggles, which were no longer seen through anti-colonial/imperial lenses. The change in attitude towards revolutionary struggles in particular is an important factor. It is important because terrorism by then was increasingly seen as a non-state activity and therefore growing disapproval of all subversive violence in general did not bode well for it.

Spurred by this unfavorable backdrop, proponents of new terrorism set out to vindicate their moral standpoint by pointing out two important recent developments that were not only novel and unprecedented in their nature and scale but also reprehensible and inexcusable in their outcome.

The first of the two developments was the emergence of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism, which since the 1980s became increasingly frequent and was regarded as the most outstanding hallmark of modern day terrorism. Although suicide violence in and of itself was not considered new, its association with religiously inspired terrorism however is thought to have transformed its character. It was seen as a tool that was exploited for its greater lethality and capacity to cause mass casualties both discretely and indiscriminately. Thought to be religiously inspired, the phenomenon is believed to have emerged out of the Palestinian and the broader Middle East conflicts (See e.g. Pape, 2003). The 1983 suicide attack on the US Marine barracks in Lebanon is considered to have ushered the age of mass casualty indiscriminate terrorist violence. As Michael Horowitz states, ‘the Lebanon bombing in the early 1980s signaled a new era of suicidal military activity... The non-state nature of the act, the casualties from the initial demonstrations, and the media coverage make the early Lebanon bombings the appropriate point at which the innovation should be considered mature’ (2010: 40-41). Suicide bombing from then onwards became one of the most prevalent and frequently observed form of terrorism.

The second important development was regarding the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that appeared after the end of cold war. This development was primarily in response to the sarin gas attack on a Tokyo subway in 1995 by the apocalyptic group Aum Shinrikyo. As Christopher Hughes says 'Events such as the Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack... have placed terrorism at the top of the post-Cold War security agenda' (1998: 39).

The use and production of WMDs has traditionally been associated with only states. Throughout the cold war the greatest threat was regarding a potential nuclear showdown between the two superpowers. However, after the fall of USSR (coupled a sharp decline in interstate conflicts and a steep rise in violent non-state activity), many of these fears were transferred to non-state actors. Although initially there were concerns regarding both the capability and willingness of non-state actors to use WMDs, the Tokyo subway attack however shattered this longstanding taboo. The attacks in other words demonstrated both the willingness and the ability of a non-state actor to use unconventional weapons that could potentially cause mass casualties.

Since both suicide attacks and willingness to use WMDs were seen as part of the evolving *raison d'être* of terrorism (as the new terrorism thesis suggested), the terrorist activity was therefore clearly no longer conservative in its target selection, *modus operandi*, and level of intensity. Suicide attacks coupled with the willingness to use WMDs thus help explain the shift from selective to total indiscrimination. Where the readiness to use WMDs manifested the desire to cause mass casualties, there the suicide attacks demonstrated a group's level of commitment and dedication to achieve that very objective. As Dolnik points out, 'The fact that suicide operations produce a large number of casualties and that they are often used indiscriminately seem to make organizations using this method primary candidates for escalation to the level of CBRN weapons' (2003: 18). The suicidal act of self-immolation paired with weapons intended for total annihilation also generated moral revulsion and undermined the political intent and rationality of the actors.

As the shift from selective to total indiscrimination shaped the moral attitude towards terrorism, it subsequently also had a huge impact on the focus and direction of future terrorism studies. Since terrorism seemingly was no longer political and the terrorists were no longer rational, many academics focused not on the intent or context but on

the irrationality and unruliness of the terrorist behavior. Given the novelty of the benchmark Tokyo subway attacks, where for the first time a non-state actor used biological weapon with the intention of causing widespread destruction, many scholars looked for unusual and novel ways in which terrorism could inflict its total indiscriminate violence.

Joseph Foxell for instance believes that there is a potential catastrophic terrorist threat to livestock and agricultural infrastructure. Referring to it as ‘agroterrorism’, Foxell points out that ‘The relatively indirect and indiscriminate nature of an agroterror attack meshes perfectly with the perceived shift in terrorism goals, which have ostensibly veered away from attempting to achieve specific political results and instead increasingly seek the destruction of ‘enemy’ societies’ (2001: 107). Robert Baird likewise postulates that there is a very real and possible threat of terrorists igniting massive wildfires. He coined the term ‘pyro-terrorism’ for this novelty and argues that it could ‘rival the destructive force of nuclear weapons’ (2006: 415). Similarly, Robert Bunker warns about the dangers of laser weapons and believes that the clock is ‘literally in countdown mode to terrorist use of laser weapons’ (2007: 452). Bunker argues that this shift in terrorist modus operandi was due to the rise of newly inspired religious terrorists that were increasingly seeking to inflict mass destruction. Pointing to Islamist groups, he observes that ‘The newer religious terrorists that arose in the late 1980s, specifically Al Qaeda and its affiliates, are looking to use weapons of mass destruction to create high levels of deaths and overwhelming damage’ (p. 449).

Such alarmist predictions were propped up by the claim that terrorism was no longer local or regional, neither in its operations nor in its aspirations. Instead, terrorism was now seen as a transnational activity with global nihilistic ambitions. It was this blanket assertion that encouraged and permitted such frightening prognostics to flourish. As opposed to being hierarchical and highly centralized in the past, terrorism was now believed to be loosely networked and decentralized. This idea was first propagated by Arquilla and Ronfeld in 1993. They point out that the modern age was ‘favoring and strengthening network forms of organizations, while simultaneously making life difficult for old hierarchical forms’ (1999: 193). Calling this development ‘netwar’, they believe that ‘network-based conflict and crime will become major phenomenon in the decades ahead’ (p. 195). Although their notion of ‘netwar’ did not

catch on but the idea of networks as opposed to hierarchies became one of the most recurring themes in the discourse.

It is important to remember here that new terrorism was first and foremost believed to be religiously (Islamic to be precise) inspired. As Daniel Masters says 'The new terrorism is defined by a tendency towards maximum destruction and a pronounced religious motivation' (2008: 396). The decentralized network thesis was therefore primarily utilized to account for the pervasive transnational character of religious or simply terrorism.

New terrorism, as we know, traces its roots from the Palestinian conflict that emerged on the global stage in the 1960s and 1970s. The conflict initially inspired struggles that were primarily regional and local in their ambitions. Over time however, such regional aspirations were supposedly overtaken by a desire for global domination. This change in ambitions was purportedly due to ideological reorientation as groups in the past were primarily nationalist and only secondarily religious, whereas the contemporary groups were principally motivated by unwavering religious ideologies with adherents willing to sacrifice their lives for their beliefs.

Religious ideologies as opposed to nationalist or separatist tend to transcend borders and can therefore have sympathizers and supporters all across the globe. It was this global appeal that supposedly allowed the decentralized networks to thrive and flourish. Nevertheless, for a religious ideology to enjoy such cross-border appeal, it is important first that it cuts through societal divisions (such as race, culture, ethnicity etc) and is unvarying and standardized. Because if it is not (as is often the case with religious ideologies), then the internal divisions will seriously restrict both its lure and proliferation and will not allow the networks to form in the first place. In other words, for the Islamic ideology to have universal appeal, it was necessary that it was uniform and homogeneous.

It is for this reason that the advocates of the new terrorism thesis presented Islamic extremism as a monolithic threat that was homogeneous in its composition and universal in its appeal. However, in order for this to happen, there had to be a transnational organization or movement first that was widely endemic and fundamentally religious. Conveniently enough, after the September 11 attacks, that organization emerged in the form of Al Qaeda. Thereafter, the academics not only

focused on the worldwide pervasiveness of Al Qaeda, but also linked it to various regional and local Islamic militant groups.

David Jones et al. observe pattern of terrorist networks in Southeast Asia and conclude that its genealogy demonstrates ‘both the long-term thinking and planning of Al Qaeda, and its protean and diffuse character, which enables it to connect to Islamist movements as far afield as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore’ (2003: 452). Lawrence Cline in an article titled *From Ocalan to Al Qaeda* tries to link the Islamist militant groups in Turkey with Al Qaeda. His linkage, however, appears completely superfluous and largely speculative. In fact, Cline barely even mentions Al Qaeda and primarily discusses the ongoing militancy in Turkey (2009: 322).

Some academics were also convinced that Al Qaeda was not only keen but was in fact in the process of developing WMDs. For this reason many actively compared Al Qaeda with Aum Shinrikyo- the only group that ever used WMDs. As Gavin Cameron says ‘Al Qaeda and Aum Shinrikyo were intent on acquiring a non-conventional weapon of mass destruction; whether that weapon was nuclear, biological or chemical was of secondary importance’ (1999: 297). Hellmich and Redig argue that the rational calculations that prevented the nuclear holocaust during the cold war do not apply to Al Qaeda (2007: 392), as it has an explicit ‘desire for mass annihilation’ (p. 382). They believe that the only obstacles the group has faced up to now are technical and tactical and ‘neither is likely to remain an obstacle for long’ (p. 393).

Jordan and Boix have identified six ‘special characteristics’ of Al Qaeda that aptly summarize the prevailing attitude towards the organization at the time. They point out that: the ideology of Al Qaeda respects no frontiers, it is decentralized and networked, its adherents blend in with the community, it has the tendency to spread, it has a willingness to use WMDs and cause mass casualties, and lastly it intends to bring about a global cultural clash (2004: 2-5).

Since the new terrorism thesis presented a monolithic picture of Islamic terrorism, it therefore either played down the longstanding ethnic and sectarian tensions in Islam or simply chose to ignore them. As is evident in Schbley’s assertion that ‘Since 9/11, however, an emerging mode of conflict identified as netwar... is assiduously working

on patching these deep wounds between Islamic sects, which are being miraculously healed' (2004: 211). Jones et al. similarly point out that Bin Laden was 'more than willing to overlook his Sunni provenance to collaborate with Shiite Iran to further the global jihadist cause' (2003: 448). Such assertions over time not only proved to be grossly exaggerated but also fundamentally wrong (as witnessed during the Shiite-Sunni sectarian violence that ensued in the aftermath of US invasion of Iraq).

Understanding of new terrorism as a monolithic Islamic threat that was apocalyptic in its beliefs, totally indiscriminate in its conduct, and loosely networked in its organization, further strengthened the conviction that terrorism was no longer political or rational. Although some new terrorism scholars would still argue that terrorism is rational and even distantly political, such assertions however appear out of place as they contradict the overall edifice of the new terrorism thesis. Suggesting for instance that terrorism is rational but totally indiscriminate or arguing that it is political yet also apocalyptic is visibly self-contradictory- as terrorism clearly cannot be a rational activity if it intends to destroy the society and it also cannot be political if it harbors irrational apocalyptic beliefs.

Nevertheless, whether religious or not, even the idea of decentralized networks made the underlying socio-political context of terrorism somewhat redundant and contributed to the body of knowledge that found terrorism's socio-political goals suspect. For if terrorism was loosely networked with no central chain of command, and if each cell was largely autonomous in its operations and undertakings, then an organization clearly had no discernable ideological or political standpoint. Additionally, the transnational character of the organization also suggested that terrorist organizations due to their networked nature had no specific headquarters or hideouts and could therefore operate anywhere. This element of unpredictability further magnified the colossal threat posed by terrorism. Terrorism, in addition to being totally indiscriminate could also happen anywhere and at any time.

Decentralized and amorphous, with an active desire to use weapons of mass destruction through an act of self-immolation if necessary, stripped terrorism off its morality completely. Such egregious categorization of terrorism ultimately led to the dehumanization of terrorists as well. The difference between terrorism and terrorist actor eventually evaporated and instead an abhorrent and a very confusing terrorist



identity subsequently emerged that could only be condemned and anathemized. Raufer's characterization of terrorists as 'lifeforms' is a case in point. He thinks that 'we are witnessing an almost biological, uncontrollable, and, thus far, uncontrolled, proliferation of dangerous, complex entities that are very hard to identify, understand and define' (1999: 35-36).

Terrorists were thus cast out as anomalies and aberrations that did not deserve the same treatment as ordinary humans. Many academics in fact went on to argue that the rights granted to ordinary citizens should not be extended to terrorists (See e.g. Turner, 2011). Etzioni believes that terrorists should not be treated as either soldiers or criminals because 'terrorists are a distinct breed that require a distinct treatment' (2010: 5). He insists that 'terrorists should not be incarcerated for a set period of time' like ordinary criminals, because the purpose of detention is to prevent criminals from committing a crime again and terrorists would certainly resort back to their ways as long as their misconstrued grievances persist. This prompts him to suggest that the Palestinian prisoners in Israel should only be released 'once the conflict between Israel and Palestine is finally settled' (p. 6-7). Similarly, Pedahzur and Ranstorp propose an 'expanded criminal justice' model to separately deal with what they consider as the exceptional problem of terrorism (2001: 6).

As the new terrorism thesis took centre stage, there was a strong backlash from the classic orthodoxy to challenge and contest its frightening prognostics.<sup>80</sup> To begin with, classic orthodoxy found the notion of 'new' highly questionable. By drawing comparisons between the so-called old and contemporary terrorism, it challenged the fundamental assertions of the new terrorism thesis. It insisted that the historical parallels between the two demonstrate continuity and not change. Merari while assessing the past and present trends in terrorism concludes that it 'has not changed much in the course of a century, and virtually not at all during the last 25 years' (1999: 53). Tucker similarly concludes that 'there is little that is new in the new terrorism, and what is new is not necessarily more dangerous or difficult to counter than the old' (2001: 1). Isabelle Duyvesteyn also believes that 'from a historical

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<sup>80</sup> It is important to note here that many new terrorism scholars often claim to take their cue from prominent classic orthodox scholars like Wilkinson, Crenshaw, and Hoffman. Therefore, among other things, it was necessary for classic orthodoxy to retaliate firmly and rebuff such distorted patronage.

perspective there are several reasons to be hesitant about the application of the label new' (2004: 440).

Through historical references, the classic orthodoxy not only drew parallels between old and contemporary terrorism but was also able to challenge the newness and unusualness of the most outstanding attributes of new terrorism. Silke, for instance, examines the novelty of suicide bombing which is deemed characteristic of modern-day terrorism. He believes that 'Explanation of suicide in terms of madness, brainwashing, coercion, and fanaticism rings hollow with many of the historical cases' (2006: 35). He asserts that the spectacle of suicide has historically played a very significant role especially in political and military context. Tracing this military/political significance to the ancient Roman Republic, he argues that suicide makes perfect logical sense when an individual's death can have a greater socio-political impact than his/her continued life (p. 37). Silke concludes that 'The tendency to ignore experiences from earlier decades and centuries creates wasteful blind spots. The assumption that our contemporary problems are unique, and that history is largely irrelevant, is not simply naïve but borders on criminal neglect' (p. 44).

Similarly, terrorist use of WMDs and the notion of indiscriminate violence has also been heatedly contested. Hoffman argues that in spite of all the prevailing assertions terrorists 'have remained remarkably conservative operationally' and 'gun and bomb remain the terrorist's main weapon of choice' (2001: 417). David Claridge suggests that there are two main reasons, strategic and logistic, which help explain why terrorists do not use weapons of mass destruction. The strategic reasons relates to traditional cost-benefit analysis. At the strategic level, terrorist as rational actors are wary of 'uncertain political consequences' and 'unequivocal international condemnation' (1999: 140-142). This strategic logic corresponds to Knutson's implicit rules of terrorist game whereby terrorists are cautious about breaking certain thresholds. The logistic factor, on the other hand, relates to obtaining the necessary materials, laboratory apparatus, technical skills, cost of the undertaking etc. (p. 139-140).

The logistical factor has over the years received considerable attention from adherents of the classic orthodox position. Since the 1995 Aum attack was treated as a watershed event, many debated and questioned the merit of such a benchmark.

William Rosenau, for instance, timely reminds that the Aum attack, despite being the first and most dangerous of its kind, was ultimately a failed attack. As a non-state actor, Aum was an extremely powerful and influential actor with billions of dollars in assets. Its failure therefore 'suggests that requirements for mass-casualty bioterrorism are considerably higher' (2001: 297). Rosenau provides a detail account of the various technological and organizational hurdles the organization confronted while developing its biological weapon. Similarly, Brian Jackson discusses the difficulties non-state actors generally face when acquiring new technologies and concludes that 'chemical and biological weapons are not simple technologies' and that there are 'significant technical obstacles to producing and using WMDs' (2001: 205).

There has also been a strong criticism of decentralized networks and transnational character of new terrorism. Its critics argue that decentralized transnational networks are not a unique characteristic of modern day terrorism and can be traced back to the anarchists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Duyvesteyn points out that the anarchist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was networked 'instead of hierarchically based' (2004: 444). She also points out that more recently many traditional terrorist organizations such as the IRA in Great Britain and the Red Army Faction also had similar transnational networks (Ibid). In similar vein, Tucker also notes that contemporary terrorism is 'Neither more networked nor ad hoc than earlier versions' (2001: 5). Additionally it is also pointed out that although contemporary organizations tend to be networked, many still have a central command in place. Therefore to assume that hierarchies are a thing of the past is clearly misleading. As Alexander Spencer notes that 'there are clear signs of hierarchical command structures in new terrorist organizations' (2006: 23). He concludes that hierarchies and networks are found in both old and new terrorism (p. 25).

Lastly, there has been a strong backlash against the so-called religious character of new terrorism. Scholars have repeatedly drawn historical parallels to show that religious terrorism is not a new or novel occurrence and point to various groups in the past that had a visible religious dimension to their violence. One of the earliest religious groups cited in the literature are the Jewish Zealots in Palestine during the first century and the Ismaili Assassins during the Middle Ages (Chaliand and Blin, 2007: 55-78). In addition to this, critics also challenge the assertion that new terrorism is entirely or completely religious in its motivation. Instead they argue that

contemporary religious terrorism, just as its predecessor, has a visible political dimension. As Duyvesteyn notes, 'new terrorism can be seen as both religious and political at the same time' (2004: 447). Spencer suggests the same for Islamist inspired groups and points out that 'although the actions of Islamist terrorist groups are religiously motivated they still have a certain political agenda' (2006: 14).

Insistence on seeing a political dimension to the religiously motivated terrorism is a crucial factor for various reasons. In classic orthodoxy (and in the insurgency discourse before that) terrorism is first and foremost believed to be political. And even though the definitional problem has plagued terrorism scholarship since its inception, the political factor has consistently been regarded as the base ingredient. Without the political factor therefore the classic orthodoxy especially was at a total loss at what was being studied.

It is important to also note that religious motivations for new terrorism were not being understood in any rational or logical sense. Instead, religiously inspired terrorists were seen as fanatics and extremists that were determined to destroy the very fabric of the society by any means possible. With no rational political considerations to restrain them, religiously motivated terrorists were believed to be the greatest threat facing mankind. As Alan Dershowitz says 'The greatest danger facing the world today comes from religiously inspired terrorist groups that are seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction' (2002: 2).

It is worth remembering here that the discourse on mass violence and use of WMDs formally emerged after the 1995 Tokyo subway attack, as Merari points out 'Following this incident there has been a gush of publications addressing the prospect of terrorism by weapons of mass destruction' (1999: 53). The attack, largely believed to be terroristic, was the work of the apocalyptic group Aum Shinrikyo. Aum's objectives, just like any other apocalyptic or cultic group, were purely in the realm of fiction and imagination. Led by a delusional yet charismatic leader, Shoko Asahara, the group believed in an impending apocalypse, which only its devout followers would be able to survive (Lifton, 2004: 65). Disillusioned and misguided and with millions of dollars at its disposal, the group hastened to jumpstart this imminent apocalypse. By using unconventional weapons, it intended to trigger a chain of

cataclysmic events that would destroy the existing society and pave the way for its imaginary post-apocalyptic world order.

The objectives of Aum, though somewhat distantly political, were certainly not rational. However, irrationality is not just characteristic of Aum but of all apocalyptic and millennial groups or cults in general. Led by prophecies and fantasies, they view the wider world with disdain and disgust and conform strictly to their very narrow and myopic viewpoint. Their beliefs and objectives appear bizarre and outlandish to anyone that is not part of the group. Their violence (or any other action for that matter), as a result, is outrightly dismissed as illogical and mindless.

Aum's categorization as a terrorist group therefore stands in contradiction to standard norms and practices. The group did not have a message to communicate to a broader audience nor did it try to create any kind of psychological impact. Moreover, it did not have any rational political demands or grievances. And lastly, it did not present any future danger from its thousands of adherents, since many were completely unaware of what Asahara and his close confidants had been planning. As Daniel Metraux says 'There is no evidence that the rank-and-file members of Aum were involved in, or even knew about the criminal activities of their leaders' (1995: 1154). This is evinced by the fact that the group, which survives to this day, has not engaged in any violent activity since the Tokyo subway attacks more than two decades ago.

Here it is important to remember that Aum was regarded as a terrorist organization primarily in the Western discourse. In Japan, the group was not taken seriously and was largely dismissed as a bizarre religious cult with irrational beliefs and objectives (Koblentz, 2011). Aum's portrayal as a terrorist organization in the Western media and discourse can in fact be seen as part of the growing post-cold war practice to focus primarily on the threat posed by non-state actors.

Due to the fall of USSR and the steady decline in inter-state wars, both the academic and popular attention had shifted towards intrastate conflicts and violence involving non-state actors. With terrorist acts being the most visible and standout manifestation of all such conflicts, media (as the primary communicator of terrorist violence) conveniently focused on the act of non-state terrorism than its socio-political context. Over time, this undue attention became further pronounced until terrorism was seen as nothing more than a physical act of senseless brutality.

Thus, as the disproportionate attention given to the act of terrorism increased considerably during the 1990s, so did the distance between terrorism's means and ends. The objectives and even the rationality of the actors, as a result, became increasingly irrelevant. Subsequently, sub-state violence of any kind that shared a physical resemblance with acts that were typically understood to be terroristic (broadly non-state acts of violence that generated fear) was quickly labeled terrorism without any forethought or consideration. Moreover, due to the increasingly disapproving attitude towards all forms of sub-state violence in general and terrorism in particular, the more moral revulsion an act generated, the more terroristic it was deemed. This is what ultimately became a defining characteristic of new terrorism and in extension the extreme orthodox position.<sup>81</sup>

Since, terrorism and terrorists were being judged solely in relation to a certain type of violent act, it is not at all surprising that the attack by Aum was instantly judged to be terroristic. The attack shared a very close resemblance with what was routinely being described as terrorism at the time. It had not only caused a number of seemingly random casualties but had also generated considerable amount of fear in its immediate aftermath. More importantly and decidedly however, it was the work of a non-state actor that had used dangerous biological weapons, which caused moral revulsion and universal condemnation. Aum, in other words, clearly met the criteria set up by the dominant extreme orthodox position.

However, Aum did not simply just meet the criteria but in fact added an extra dimension to the emerging dominant understanding of terrorism. Through its act of total indiscrimination, Aum was able to extend visible and vocal support to the extreme orthodox claim that terrorism was now both qualitatively and quantitatively different. Even though its attack did not cause too many casualties, its use of biological weapons to jumpstart a worldwide apocalypse expressly demonstrated its willingness to do just that. Some of the extreme orthodox forebodings regarding the destructive and harmful power of contemporary and future terrorism were now evidently no longer hypothetical. In a sense therefore, the Aum attack not only

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<sup>81</sup> For extreme orthodoxy, terrorism was simply a morally reprehensible and indefensible fear-generating act of sub-state violence.

manifested but also magnified the attributes that were beginning to be associated with new terrorism.

Thus, Aum's desire to destroy the existing social order and its unusual choice of weapon to achieve that end, provided impetus and credibility to the extreme orthodox assertion that terrorism was now willing to break all thresholds and was no longer going to play by the rules.

Its most significant impact however was in terms of the manner in which Aum's apocalyptic and cultic beliefs lent unequivocal support to the idea that both the objectives and rationality of the terrorists were becoming increasingly redundant. Where this clearly provided the extreme orthodoxy with additional justification for finding terrorism morally repulsive and indefensible, there it allowed the apocalyptic logic to be extended to other contemporary terrorist groups.

Such logic was particularly applicable to groups that had a religious dimension to their violence, since almost all religions including Christianity and Islam harbor some form of apocalyptic or messianic beliefs (See e.g. Rapoport, 1988; Cooper, 2005). As Lorne Dawson says 'The refrains of apocalyptic rhetoric can be heard throughout history and the world though they are most pronounced in the three great religious traditions of the West: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam' (2009: 11). In a sense therefore, the goals and objectives of all religiously inspired groups could alternatively be understood in apocalyptic and messianic terms, which among other things, allowed religious terrorist groups to be compared with the likes of Aum Shinrikyo and other millennial groups. Comparisons such as these ultimately shaped the understanding of new terrorism.

As the apocalyptic character of religious groups was singled out and comparisons with other millennial groups were drawn, the political and other objectives of the groups became distinctly irrelevant. A group's stated grievances or grudges thereof were either outrightly ignored or were simply shunned and cast aside as illogical or dishonest. Subsequently, even groups that were previously thought to be nationalist or separatist and only secondarily religious were now duly reassessed.

Moreover, since religion tends to transcend borders, ethnicities, and nationalities, the apocalyptic threat it presented was believed to be widespread, endemic, and

transnational. This widely pervasive transnational character was supposedly facilitated by a system of decentralized networks that was held together by the unitary and monolithic appeal of the religion. This allowed religious terrorism to not only maintain indigenous cells all across the globe but also inspire lonewolf actors that adhered to similar religious ideals. Even local and regional groups that were distantly religious were now seen as part of the monolithic transnational religious movement. Their respective individual objectives in the process were either trivialized or dismissed altogether. Instead, they were all believed to be first and foremost united in their faith, sharing a similar apocalyptic view of the world.

Understanding of religiously inspired terrorism in an apocalyptic sense clearly conflated means and ends. Just like apocalyptic and messianic cults, terrorists did not have a message to communicate to a wider audience. Their beliefs, objectives, and grievances were similarly fictional and unintelligible. Violence no longer had any thresholds, as the entire society was the enemy. The choice of weapon was not conventional or conservative but unusual and appalling. Targets were not selected for their symbolic or representative value but because they did not adhere to the group's strict ideology. Death and destruction was no longer a calculated tool that was employed sporadically and selectively but was instead an objective in itself. There were no standard rules of the game, there were no freedom fighters, guerillas, or insurgents that employed terrorist tactics, there were just terrorists.

Such conflation of means and ends not only drew a clear line between an old and a new understanding of terrorism but also between the classic and extreme orthodox positions. With extreme orthodox claims that classic orthodoxy was only applicable to the past, there was understandably an open confrontation between the two. And just as the former became the dominant position, the classic orthodoxy launched a strong counteroffensive, vehemently opposing its most basic assertions.

The strongest opposition was concerning the rationality and political nature of terrorism. This is because, despite all definitional problems, the classic orthodoxy has always treated terrorism as a rational and political activity. Without these two base ingredients, many leading classic orthodox adherents (such as Wilkinson, Crenshaw, Jenkins, Merari, Silke, and Schmid) expressed serious concerns over the future



direction of terrorism studies. For if terrorism was an irrational and a purposeless activity then how could it be studied in an analytical or a scientific manner?

Given that the extreme orthodox position justified its standpoint by pointing to Aum Shinrikyo and its 1995 Tokyo Subway attack as proof of terrorism's irrationality and desire for total annihilation, adherents of classic orthodoxy were highly skeptical of it. Since Aum was an archetypal apocalyptic group, irrational and without any discernable political objectives, classic orthodoxy was highly critical of any comparisons drawn with nationalist, separatists and other traditional terrorist groups. As Claridge notes 'the argument that the Aum attack is some kind of watershed is groundless. No serious organization would want to be compared with Aum' (1999: 143).

Questions therefore were raised as to whether Aum should even be regarded as a terrorist actor and if it was right to treat it as a benchmark for the so-called religiously inspired new terrorism. The claim that there was a global monolithic religious threat (emanating from Islamic fundamentalism) that shared a similar apocalyptic view of the world was particularly scrutinized. Other than pointing out the political grievances of all such religious groups, critics also noted that the presence or emergence of such groups was not a novelty. It was argued that groups with religious dimension to their violence have existed throughout history. What was different or new however was the attention that was given to the religious element. As Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Nicholas Rengger pithily observe 'it is not really that religion has suddenly been resurgent, but rather that Western scholars, policy makers, and journalists have begun to take more note of it' (2006: 544).

This undue attention given to religion was clearly in large part due to its inherent apocalyptic character that permitted comparisons with the likes of Aum, thereby amplifying the threat posed by religion in general. Additionally, as we know, media has always given disproportionate attention to the act of terrorism than its context. With terrorism now described as an irrational activity that intended to destroy the existing social order with WMDs, the subsequent media attention of terrorism not only became more disproportionate and visibly pronounced but due to strong academic patronage was also deemed justified.

Following the September 11 attacks, this disproportionate attention given to the act of terrorism along with the extreme orthodox support of it escalated sharply. The moral attitude towards terrorism as a result also began to change drastically. Although classic orthodoxy too had routinely condemned terrorism, it was nevertheless always somewhat flexible over the question of its justification. The extreme orthodoxy on the other hand not only condemned terrorism unequivocally but also ruled its justification out of hand. In fact, anything short of total and unequivocal condemnation and rejection of terrorism was met with contempt and opprobrium, so much so that any form of moral justification for terrorism was often equated with encouraging it (See e.g. Dershowitz, 2002; Jones and Smith, 2010). Thus, the classic orthodoxy, with its justificatory space and moral neutrality, was simply no longer considered relevant. With terrorism believed to have been radically transformed, the extreme orthodox position was judged to be the only position that fully grasped and understood the challenges this new threat posed.

Deemed outdated and outmoded, the credibility of classic orthodoxy as an academic inquiry into the problem of terrorism was now seriously threatened. Struggling for survival and relevance, the classic orthodoxy launched a strong counteroffensive against the notion of new terrorism and the extreme orthodox position.

This strong backlash was considered necessary for not only the continued relevance of classic orthodoxy, but also due to the detrimental effect that the extreme orthodoxy was having on both the study and general understanding of terrorism. Its effect became apparent when its forebodings and predictions failed to materialize and after many of its suggestions and recommendations backfired. For instance, despite its repeated warnings regarding future use of WMDs, no group even came close employing such weapons. The strategic and logistical barriers to obtaining and utilizing WMDs, as the classic orthodoxy had insisted, were proving to be considerable obstacles. Similarly, its depiction of Islamic terrorism as a monolithic threat turned out to be largely misplaced as fragmentation and infighting between different Muslim sects and ethnicities in the aftermath of Afghanistan and Iraq invasions and the Arab Spring became widely prevalent.

Most noticeably perhaps, the extreme orthodox assertion that terrorism no longer had any logical political ambitions and was irrational and apocalyptic, not only turned out

to be grossly inaccurate but also an unsustainable oversimplification. As over time the political and rational logic of terrorism became glaringly obvious and was very hard to ignore or refute (See e.g. Pape, 2003; Hoffman, 2003; Fierke, 2009). Even groups like Al Qaeda that was seen as an apocalyptic terrorist group by extreme orthodoxy had visible political objectives. Although these objectives were largely ignored in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, however, as the US war on terrorism floundered and as Al Qaeda continued to attract and inspire new recruits despite being pursued by a super power for over a decade, its political and rational dimension could hardly be disregarded.

Thus, as these new political realities surfaced, the façade of the extreme orthodox position was gradually exposed and as a result its dominance slowly began to wane. It is important to note however that this fall from grace is only in reference to its loss of stature as the dominant position in the terrorism scholarship. Beyond academia, however, it continued to enjoy wide support in both media and political circles.

Media and the extreme orthodox position have always enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship since both essentially focus on the act of terrorism than its wider socio-political context. Driven primarily by profits, media, as we know focuses mainly on the dramatic, sensational, and newsworthy aspects of terrorism. Conveniently for media, the extreme orthodox position with its forebodings and warnings about WMDs and mass annihilation, presented a very dramatic and chilling account of terrorism that had an immense commercial value. The extreme orthodox position provided an academic warrant to media's disproportionate representation of the act and its exaggerated portrayal of the terrorist threat. Thus even when the extreme orthodoxy became highly questionable in the academic discourse and lost its dominant status, it continued to enjoy overwhelming support of media.

Similarly, on the other hand, government and policy analysts are also drawn towards the extreme orthodox position. The reasons for such attraction are diverse and complex and certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it will suffice to say here that government representatives and policy makers are fairly wary of unfavorable outcomes that can result in public backlash or political fallout. Borrowing from the logic of prospect theory, policy makers generally tend to be loss averse, as they are greatly concerned about 'a decline in their reputation or credibility' (Levy,

1992: 285). A fear of loss can therefore not only prompt them to take great risks but can also make them pay excessive and unnecessary attention to potential losses. Moreover, the greater the alarm or some perceived fear of loss, the greater will be the attention directed towards it. Since a threat of WMDs and mass destruction represents irreversible loss and unimaginable damage, the importance given to extreme orthodoxy is certainly understandable.

Thus, media's relentless quest for dramatic and sensational news and government's propensity to lean towards the alarmist end of the spectrum ensured continued survival of the extreme orthodox position. Since terrorism is essentially an open scholarly communication system with information flowing from mainly government and media sources, the support of both media and government made the extreme orthodox position stand out despite facing strong resistance from within the field. In other words, even though the position was no longer dominant and many of its fundamental assertions had either been quashed or proven to be wrong, it still did not diminish altogether.

This sustained importance understandably caused considerable friction in the academic discourse. Although opposition to the extreme orthodox position was certainly not new, it became more visible and pronounced after the position lost its dominant status because of the emerging political realities that unveiled its failings. However despite its obvious inadequacies, it still managed to secure crucial support from media and government sources and for that reason continued to play an important role in the discourse. It was this continued importance and unconditional media and government patronage that reinvigorated the academic resolve to challenge and oppose the extreme orthodox position more determinately and forcefully than ever before.

### **The Critical Position**

The classic orthodox position, which had been under tremendous pressure following the September 11 attacks, started to reemerge just as the war on terrorism began to flounder and the failure and façade of the extreme orthodox position became blatantly apparent. Among other things, it continued to oppose and challenge the fundamental

assertions of the extreme orthodox position. However, the continued existence and importance accorded to extreme orthodoxy despite the damage it had already rendered to the study of terrorism made some academics highly skeptical of classic orthodoxy's commitment to challenge it effectively. Moreover, since extreme orthodoxy emerged from within the mainstream terrorism scholarship, many simply failed to distinguish between the two orthodoxies. Distrustful and mindful of the entire scholarship as a result, the disgruntled scholars set up a parallel research agenda with claims to emancipate the study of terrorism.

Inspired by the Frankfurt School, this new research agenda identified itself as critical studies on terrorism and formally emerged with the launch of the journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism* in 2008. Disappointed and frustrated with what it saw as demonization and compartmentalization of terrorism as an evil and immoral form of violence, it started with a strong and forceful critique of the orthodox terrorism scholarship. Using Michel Foucault's notion of power-knowledge interplay it argued that knowledge especially in the context of terrorism is subservient to power and government elites (Burke, 2008). Through various post-modern and critical approaches, it tried to explain the dominance and continued government support for the extreme orthodox position.

The critical position strongly objected to the categorical rejection of terrorism on moral grounds. By comparing terrorism to other forms of violence, it argued that terrorism, in terms of its intensity and violence was far less destructive and dangerous. It firmly opposed the view that terrorism is an abhorrent or evil form of violence and that terrorists should be treated differently and denied basic human rights. It advocated moral neutrality and argued that terrorism was no more condemnable than other forms of violence and if other forms of violence were justified, then so was terrorism (See e.g. Held, 2004; Dexter, 2012). The critical position in particular dismissed the notion of new terrorism and rejected the extreme orthodox claim that there was a distinct and qualitatively different form of religiously inspired terrorism that was apocalyptic and nihilistic in its drive and ambition (See e.g. Stohl, 2008; Spencer, 2011).

It becomes somewhat obvious that the rise of critical studies was essentially a reaction to the dominant extreme orthodox position. Its assertion that the threat of terrorism

was blown out of proportion coupled with its robust challenge to the notion of religiously inspired terrorism was clearly a response to the new terrorism thesis. Similarly, its unwavering advocacy of moral neutrality was a visible rejection of extreme orthodoxy's outright condemnation and denunciation of all terrorist violence.

Interestingly however, where on the one hand such contentions demonstrate critical position's strict opposition to extreme orthodoxy, there on the other hand they reveal that the criticism offered was not very different from the one provided by classic orthodoxy. In fact, its contentions go on to show that there is little, if at all any, difference between critical and classic orthodox conception of terrorism. Both give a justificatory space to terrorism, are mindful of observing moral neutrality, warn against isolating the act of terrorism from its wider socio-political context, and forcefully reject the notion of new terrorism and all that it entails. Such overlap is somewhat unexpected, given that the critical position claims to denounce the entire orthodox terrorism scholarship.

As discussed already, part of the reason why critical scholarship repeatedly failed to acknowledge this overlap was due to the fact that the extreme orthodox position emerged from within the mainstream terrorism discourse, which made it difficult to isolate it entirely. Furthermore, the extreme orthodox position was clearly the more visible and vocal of the two positions that not only dominated the discourse for over a decade but also continued to enjoy wide media and government support even after many of its fundamental assertions had been quashed by the classic orthodox position.

Nevertheless, despite this overlap and a shared understanding of terrorism, there was one important factor that stood out prominently in the critical research agenda. This factor was regarding the identity of the terrorist actor. The critical position argued that the terrorist activity should be independent of the actor and strongly criticized the orthodox terrorism scholarship for being deeply non-state centric. In fact it posited that non-state centricity was the most hypocritical and deceptive feature of mainstream terrorism discourse. This profound opposition to non-state centricity in due course became the most outstanding and recognizable feature of critical scholarship.

Critical position's preoccupation with the terrorist identity can in part be explained by its theoretical predisposition. As the position took its inspiration from post-modern

and critical approaches in social sciences, knowledge-power interplay was at the heart of its thesis. It was essentially centered on the core assumption that knowledge is not neutral and all too often serves power so as to conceal 'its political function within claims to objectivity and expertise' (Burke, 2008: 37). In other words, the critical position saw non-state centrality in terrorism scholarship as a condition that had deliberately been imposed by the state or powerful elites to further their own interests. This, it argued, was due to the pejorative and derogative undertone of the term terrorism that states utilized as a delegitimizing tool to condemn and criticize their opponents.

For the critical scholarship therefore, the identity of the actor and an understanding of existing power dynamics was a crucial and a necessary first step to solving the problem of terrorism. For it believed that only through exposing the concealed power dynamics could the nature of terrorism be truly liberated- nature that was otherwise independent of the actor. This idea that the nature of terrorism is independent of the actor, though elemental to critical conception of terrorism, is in itself not new. The roots of this line of thinking can be found in earlier works especially in the field of philosophy.

Philosophers generally agree that irrespective of how terrorism is defined, the identity of the actor will be irrelevant to the nature and character of the activity. As Primoratz explains, 'If some acts of state agents are basically similar to and exhibit the same morally relevant traits as acts of non-state agencies commonly termed terrorist, that will clearly determine our moral understanding and evaluation of both' (2004: 114). Distinguishing state violence from terrorism proper (or even state terrorism from non-state terrorism) when the basic nature and character of violence is the same violates the fundamental philosophical principle of consistency, which requires that we judge similar acts similarly for 'one cannot perform virtually identical acts and judge them differently unless they differ in morally relevant aspects' (Holmes, 1989: 196-197).

The principle of consistency has made philosophers deeply skeptical of the provision of supreme emergency and the doctrine of double effect that not only grant state violence some form of immunity but supposedly also distinguish it from terrorism (See e.g. Coady, 1985; Rodin, 2004; McPherson, 2007). This, they believe, creates a double standard, which is both morally and analytically unsustainable. As Valls

argues 'From a philosophical point of view, this double standard cannot be sustained... consistency requires that we apply the same standards to both kinds of political violence, state and non-state' (2000: 66).

Borrowing from the field of philosophy, the critical position made an active and robust case for actor neutrality and accordingly dismissed all approaches and definitions that categorically excluded states and tied the nature of terrorism to non-state actors. Richard Jackson, for instance believes that 'the actor-based definition of terrorism which excludes states from employing terrorism is not only intellectually untenable, it is absurd' (2008: 383). Kaplan similarly argues that it is important to have a definition of terrorism that allows 'flexibility regarding agency' (2009: 187).

While actor neutrality is the most outstanding feature of the critical position, it is by no means exclusive to it. As discussed already, the classic orthodox position has also routinely advocated actor neutrality. From Wilkinson's contention that the tendency to apply the term 'terrorism exclusively to substate groups is blatantly dishonest and self-serving' (2000: 1) to Crenshaw's assertion that 'the identity of the actor does not matter to the specification of the method' (2011: 4), the classic orthodox position has espoused actor neutrality since the inception of the field of terrorism studies. English has pithily observed this predicament, he argues that 'many non-CST scholars would agree that states as well as non-state groups practice terrorism and that state terrorism should be studied' (2009: 378). In light of such assertions, critical position's dismissal of the entire orthodox scholarship as non-state centric appears fairly unwarranted.

Such critical objections though certainly harsh are nevertheless justified insofar as the research agenda of classic orthodox position is concerned. As despite its claims of actor neutrality, the orthodox scholarship as a whole has largely failed to study state terrorism in any rigorous sense and focuses almost entirely on non-state terrorism. Critical scholars argue that merely suggesting that terrorism is independent of the actor does not constitute an active research agenda, nor does it alter the fact that orthodox scholarship is almost entirely non-state centric. Ruth Blakeley, for instance, criticizes the orthodox assertion that many leading scholars including Wilkinson have repeatedly acknowledged state terrorism and points out that 'Occasional acknowledgements on Wilkinson's part do not constitute a research agenda' (2008:



154). The critical position therefore finds the orthodox claims to actor neutrality both toothless and deceptive.

In spite of classic orthodoxy's otherwise assertions, non-state centricity and state neglect has indeed been a regular feature of terrorism studies since its infancy. This latent capacity of the discourse to focus primarily on non-state terrorism became more deeply entrenched and pronounced over time. Finally, with the rise of the extreme orthodox position, which rejected the actor neutrality of classic orthodoxy and promoted a strict actor centric approach, non-state centricity in many ways became a defining characteristic of the orthodox scholarship.

The problem was additionally compounded by classic orthodoxy's failure to address the issue adequately. Even though it had robustly challenged and resisted extreme orthodoxy's most outstanding characteristics, it did not (or simply could not) challenge its actor centric advocacy. Clearly this was primarily due to its own neglect that had permitted non-state centricity to thrive and flourish in the first place. Nevertheless, as a result of its failure, mainstream terrorism scholarship became profoundly non-state centric, which subsequently made its claims to actor neutrality appear superfluous and insincere.

Critical scholarship's grievances regarding state neglect and non-state centricity of mainstream terrorism studies are therefore well founded. However, while such grievances may partially be justified, it is important to remember that orthodox discourse's non-state centricity is to a large extent not entirely by design (as is generally presumed by the critical position). As discussed earlier, there are a range of external factors that encourage non-state centricity and prevent scholars from doing little more than occasionally acknowledging state terrorism.

In fact, given the wide range of problems (not to mention the dominance of the actor centric extreme orthodox position), classic orthodoxy's continuous insistence on observing actor neutrality is at least partially commendable. This by no means is to excuse it entirely, as it often focuses on non-state terrorism simply because it is the convenient option, but to understand the underlying variables that additionally force it to be non-state centric despite its pronounced objections. As many of these variables (such as state-funded research, disproportionate media attention of non-state terrorism etc.) continue to influence and direct the non-state centric research agenda of the

terrorism scholarship. Thus, even though non-state centrality is neither admirable nor particularly desirable, it is at least understandable. It is precisely this understanding that is categorically missing from the deeply skeptical critical scholarship.

The critical position certainly offers some very interesting insights into the problem of terrorism. Among other things, it has played an important role in deconstructing certain myths and taboos that were often associated with terrorism, especially after the rise of the extreme orthodox position (See e.g. Stohl, 2008; Zulaika and Douglas, 2008; Sluka, 2008). Additionally, it has also shed light on how the pejorative undertone of the term is frequently used as a political tool to delegitimize opponents (See e.g. Herring, 2008; Sorenson, 2009; Bartolucci, 2010). Most importantly, it has not been afraid to show how states, including Western liberal democracies actively utilize and benefit from the tool of terrorism (See e.g. Burke, 2008; Jackson, 2012).

However, where its post-modern and critical predisposition offered original and fresh insight into the problem of terrorism, there it also prompted a complete and total rejection of the entire orthodox scholarship. With its focus on knowledge-power interplay, the critical position was more concerned about showing how the existing knowledge on terrorism serves the interests of states and powerful elites. Though many of its contentions are indeed justified (as demonstrated by the continued importance and relevance of the extreme orthodox position), its strict adherence to post-modern and critical ideals prevented it from realizing that there was more to terrorism scholarship than just state bias and power subservience. Moreover, as it blamed knowledge-power partiality for state neglect, it failed to also acknowledge the multitude of problems academics face while studying state terrorism (ironically many of such problems later prevented it from studying state terrorism as well).

The rise of the critical studies was a direct response to the dominance of the extreme orthodox position and although commendable at the time, its inability to see past it has been regrettable. Led by its uncompromising theoretical standpoint, the critical position painted the entire terrorism scholarship with a broad brush, refusing to acknowledge any provision or exception. Ultimately the entire discourse was cast in the same light as the extreme orthodox position. This myopic viewpoint prevented it from ever realizing the existence of the classic orthodox position, with which it shared many of its key assertions.

With criticism of terrorism scholarship at its heart and a normative claim to emancipate the study of terrorism, critical studies put forth a very confusing and complicated research agenda. For most observers, the critical scholarship primarily offered nothing more than an active critique of terrorism scholarship that had very little to do with terrorism itself (See e.g. Weinberg and Eubank, 2008; Jones and Smith; 2010). Not to discredit some important work that has been done in the field, but there is certainly some truth to this claim. Due to its theoretical assertion that no knowledge is neutral, coupled with its failure to see past the extreme orthodox position, the critical position to a large extent has indeed been consumed by its unequivocal and outright condemnation of the entire terrorism scholarship. Owing to its strong and persistent distrust of mainstream terrorism scholarship, the impact of critical position has largely been restricted to its strict adherents. As opposed to the other two positions therefore, the critical position due to its fairly limited appeal was never the dominant position in the discourse.

By choosing to ignore the common ground it shared with classic orthodoxy and reclining instead to a position of deep discontent and antipathy, the critical position in spite all its potential advantages, failed to achieve any noticeable impact. Most orthodox terrorism scholars were understandably unconvinced of its uncompromising criticism and therefore did not take it seriously. Moreover, its preference to stay outside mainstream terrorism scholarship further contributed to it being sidelined. This ultimately reduced the critical approach to a mere accusatory and denunciatory position that was increasingly isolated and ignored.

It is important to point out in the end that although the critical position formally came to limelight after the launch of the journal CST in 2008, the position itself is not new. Despite its claims of an independent and separate research agenda, shades of it are visible in the orthodox terrorism literature as well. This is because scholars of different theoretical dispositions, including critical thought have long contributed to mainstream terrorism scholarship. Many orthodox scholars, for instance, have long been self-reflective and critical of the existing research practices in terrorism scholarship (See e.g. Crenshaw, 1992; Schmid, 1998; Silke, 2001). Similarly, many other scholars have noted the problem of knowledge-power interplay and how the pejorative undertone of the term terrorism is employed for relative political advantage (See e.g. Wardlaw, 1989; Teichman, 1989; Herman and O'Sullivan, 1990). And as

pointed out earlier, many orthodox scholars also routinely grant justificatory space to terrorism and have visibly been critical of state neglect.

The critical approach is therefore neither new nor unique, nor does it stand in complete opposition to orthodox scholarship as it proudly claims. Thus although with the launch of the CST journal, it sought to isolate itself from mainstream terrorism scholarship as a distinct, unique, and oppositional position, however the only thing unique about the self-styled post-2008 critical position is its complete and total rejection of the orthodox scholarship.

## **Discussion**

It is clear from our analysis that all three academic positions come with a host of problems. This is of course not to say that all three are equally problematic. The extreme orthodox position with its strict moral opposition undermines the longstanding conceptual and theoretical edifice of terrorism. It is therefore detrimental to the study of terrorism and clearly also the most problematic of the three positions. In comparison, the critical position neither undermines nor challenges any of the fundamental assumptions regarding terrorism. Nevertheless, its total and complete disregard for mainstream terrorism scholarship has prevented it from not only being an effective position but from also realizing the common ground it shares with the classic orthodox position. Its uncompromising oppositional standpoint and a failure to have any significant impact continue to cause friction in the discourse.

Lastly, the classic orthodox position is quite visibly the least problematic of the three positions. Even though it has its due share of problems (state neglect and non-state centrality being the most standout), yet it is the only position that has persistently defended what is most fundamental to terrorism, even when it faced a strong and formidable onslaught by the extreme orthodox position. It is also the only position that does not take an extreme moral viewpoint. Admittedly, due to a shared conception of the problem of terrorism, it does somewhat tend to lean towards the critical end of the spectrum. However, where the critical position tends to be overcritical of state terrorism and over defensive of non-state terrorism, the classic orthodox position (conceptually speaking) is able to keep some form of moral

neutrality, at least in comparison with the two extreme positions. Out of the three positions therefore, the classic orthodox is clearly the most pragmatic and outward looking position.

It was pointed out at the beginning of the chapter that the three positions are not entirely exclusive, as there tends to be significant overlap between all of them. It is important to point out now that this overlap is essentially between the two extremes and the classic orthodox position and not between the two extremes themselves. This is because the difference between the two extremes is so vast and their denouncement of each other is so pronounced that there can be no common ground between them. Regardless of the dominance of any position, academics adhering to opposite extremes will never be swayed otherwise. The only trespassing permitted therefore is between one of the two extremes and the classic orthodoxy. This is because where the extreme positions tend to be fairly rigid in their outlook and disposition, the classic orthodox tends to be somewhat flexible and accommodating.

Nevertheless, despite any overlap and trespassing, the three positions are in their own unique way fairly distinct (especially the two extremes) and can therefore be easily discerned in light of the analysis provided in this chapter. However, even if these positions exist and can easily be discerned, are they in any way useful? More importantly, can these positions help us better understand the problem of terrorism? These questions may seem elementary but they are also important and necessary. Indeed, most academics will first question the merit and utility of this academic categorization.

As mentioned at the start of the chapter, a failure to understand terrorism owes as much (if not more) to the competing, conflicting, and contradictory academic positions as to the complex nature of terrorism. In fact, the widespread assertion that terrorism is a deeply contested term is essentially an indictment of constant academic failings and not of terrorism itself. Therefore, in order to understand terrorism and to make it less contested, it is imperative that we first try and make sense of the academic scholarship that claims to study it. Given the profoundly confusing state of terrorism scholarship, this classification is not only necessary but also long overdue. Although it must be pointed out here that while the three positions outlined in this chapter are a first, attempt to structure and discipline the study of terrorism is

certainly not (See e.g. Hermon and O'Sullivan, 1989; Schmid, 1998). The most recent of such attempts has been made by Lisa Stampnitzky.

Stampnitzky pithily observes that 'neither the problem of terrorism nor the field of terrorism expertise has been fully disciplined' (2013: 7). She takes note of the fact that during the 1970s a discourse that was previously 'organized around insurgency' shifted to 'one organized around the concept of terrorism' (p. 49-50). This new framework of terrorism, she argued would recast 'incidents as the acts of pathological, irrational actors, precluding its application to the actions of states or legitimate actors' (p. 9). In Stampnitzky's opinion therefore, the discourse since its inception viewed terrorism as inherently immoral and pathological. In her own words, 'Discourse about the inherent immorality of terrorism has centrally shaped the possibilities for the creation of both knowledge about terrorism and terrorism experts themselves' (p. 8).

While Stampnitzky's efforts are certainly commendable, she falls for the same trap as critical scholars. Her portrayal of terrorism expertise does not account for the classic orthodox position, which does not view terrorism as immoral and pathological. Like critical scholars, she fails to see past the more visible and pronounced extreme orthodox position. Although she identifies a 'core group' or 'terrorism mafia' that was 'at the centre of the emerging terrorism studies world, who took on the project of making the field a legitimate area of study' (p. 42) and 'were most invested in maintaining a professional/academic direction to the field' (p. 47), her categorical denouncement of the entire terrorism expertise makes such assertions appear completely out of place.

Thus, even though her work is important intellectual contribution, it clearly has its limitations. Such limitations however are not just characteristic of her work but of all similar attempts to understand terrorism scholarship, as they all categorically fail to distinguish between the classic and the extreme orthodox positions. It is precisely this failure that has prompted this study.

Terrorism scholarship has faced intense academic scrutiny ever since the war on terrorism floundered and the façade of the extreme orthodox position was exposed. Although such criticism is mostly undiscerning, it is primarily intended for the extreme orthodox position. Schwartz et al. for instance are critical of terrorism

scholars in general because they ‘adopt an antagonistic and condescending view of terrorists- one that precludes a full perceptive understanding of their goals’ (2009: 539). Their criticism is clearly intended for scholars that adhere to the extreme orthodox position, however their failure to acknowledge any distinction in the scholarship, erroneously prompts them to criticize it in its entirety. Thus, in the absence of formal categorization, all such criticisms and attacks are like stray arrows that are aimed blindly at the entire terrorism discourse.

As opposed to such impetuous and blanket criticisms and assertions, the model outlined in this chapter is therefore clearly a more accurate representation of terrorism scholarship. By isolating the extreme orthodox from the classic orthodox position, it contextualizes and standardizes much of the criticism that erroneously engulfs the entire terrorism expertise. It is important to also remember that terrorism is first and foremost an essentially contested term. Any attempt to understand it would therefore be futile if the approaches utilized to study terrorism are muddled and obscure to begin with. Only through such realization can we make terrorism less contested and pave way for its conceptual and theoretical development.

## Conclusion

The contest over the precise meaning of terrorism is unlikely to subside in the years to come. While this may be true, it should at least be possible to get rid of some of the longstanding redundancies that have needlessly complicated the problem of terrorism. Over the course of this thesis, several notable redundancies have been identified that continue to exist despite being visibly unnecessary. For example, it is a fairly common practice to simultaneously use all the categories of civilian, non-combatant, and innocent or in varying combinations to describe the victim of terrorism when the non-combatant category alone sufficiently incorporates the other two. Similarly, it is exceedingly common to use the terms random and indiscriminate together. Such a practice is needlessly excessive as the term indiscriminate adequately incorporates randomness. Whether terrorism is ultimately indiscriminate or targets non-combatants is beside the point here. A discourse that is already laden with complex jargons and terminologies could certainly do without such redundancies. I will now move on to the central question of whether terrorism can be defined, the answer to which expectedly is not a straightforward one.

It has become evident through our discussion that terrorism is essentially a deeply contested term and while an understanding of different academic positions can offer significant clarity, it cannot and will not provide a solution to the definition of terrorism. Defining a highly politicized and an inherently pejorative term was always going to be a difficult and grueling undertaking. Over the years therefore, serious commentators in the field have attempted to disassociate the nature of terrorism from its highly politicized and pejorative undertone. Their efforts have produced countless models and definitions, which despite being diverse and inconsistent allude to certain common themes and features that have been remarkably consistent. It is these recurring themes that have been subjected to a rigorous examination in this thesis.

This thesis has identified three major themes in the discourse: terror, victim, and actor. And while the conclusions drawn in relation to each of these themes are not



particularly distinct, their analysis nevertheless was able to offer several fresh and original insights into the problem of terrorism.

The first chapter grappled with the problem of terror and whether or not terrorism generates fear. Although its conclusion that an act or threat of terrorism (since it disrupts social life) will always generate fear is not very different from similar assertions in the wider terrorism discourse, the manner in which this conclusion was arrived at however, offered visible original insights. Among other things, it was able to provide an answer to one of the most widely debated questions of whether terrorist generation of fear is necessarily deliberate.

The debate over deliberate generation of fear is often forestalled due to moral considerations on the one hand and practical considerations on the other. At the moral end it is believed that the deliberate factor makes terrorism immoral, whereas on the practical side it is argued that without the deliberate factor terrorism cannot be distinguished from other forms of violence. Through carefully discerning the philosophical roots of terrorism, the chapter was able to show how a Hobbesian conception of society can explain deliberate generation of fear while its Lockean counterpart can account for it as an unintended by-product. In other words, the model provided satisfies both the moral and the practical side of the ongoing argument. This is certainly an important contribution given that the question of deliberate generation of fear has frustrated many academics over the years.

The second chapter analyzed in detail the academic debate over the victim of terrorism. Although it too arrived at a somewhat conventional conclusion (that terrorism as of necessity targets or threatens non-combatants), yet in the process of doing so, it provided several notable insights into some complex problems (the moral problem in particular) that are typically associated with the category of victim. It put forth a moral continuum that challenges the conventional wisdom that there are only two types of moral attitudes towards terrorism- one that grants it a justificatory space and the other that condemns it unequivocally. Instead it proposes that in between the two opposing viewpoints, there are passive approaches that can lean towards either side of the moral spectrum. The proposed continuum therefore is a more accurate representation of moral attitudes towards terrorism than the prevailing black and white assertions.

As the chapter further explored a number of important intervening variables (deliberate and indiscriminate in particular), it was able to uncover some longstanding inconsistencies in the discourse that mostly go unnoticed. It demonstrated how scholars on both ends of the moral continuum often identify the exact same set of variables and yet curiously enough arrive at completely opposite moral conclusions. This observation (as will become clear at the end of this conclusion) exposes the moral façade of terrorism as it proves that academics clearly don't know what makes terrorism immoral.

The most outstanding contribution of the chapter however has been its treatment of the problem of innocence, responsibility and justification of terrorist violence. Responsibility and innocence have traditionally been treated as incompatible. This incompatibility has been utilized on both sides of the moral continuum to make a case for or against terrorism. Adherents of the amoral position argue that victims of terrorism are innocent because they bear no visible responsibility for some real or perceived wrongdoing. Whereas on the other hand, strict followers of the moral position utilize the logic of collective responsibility to show that the victims of terrorism can be held responsible for a wrongdoing and are therefore not innocent in the strict sense of the term.<sup>82</sup> This has resulted in an impasse with both sides failing to understand that the relationship between responsibility and innocence is not one-dimensional. To resolve this dilemma, the chapter put forth the concept of imposed responsibility, which explains how it is possible to be responsible for a wrongdoing while still being innocent. By showing how a responsibility can involuntarily be imposed, it not only attests to the rationality of terrorism but also leaves room for voluntary responsibility and subsequent justification of terrorist violence.

The third and the fourth chapter meticulously engaged with the final theme regarding the identity of the terrorist actor. The problem of terrorist identity has clearly received more attention than any other issue or theme in this thesis. Part of the reason for such preferential treatment was to make up for state neglect and non-state centrality, which is characteristic of terrorism discourse. More importantly however, the identity of the

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<sup>82</sup> Targeting innocents that bear no responsibility for a wrongdoing not only strips terrorism of its justification but also borders irrationality, which explains why the moral position has been extremely wary of it.

actor is a serious contentious point primarily because it threatens any attempt to separate the nature of terrorism from its highly politicized and pejorative undertone. Indeed if terrorism is associated with a certain class of actors in the society its nature will subsequently be corrupted, unless of course identity is part of the very nature of terrorism, which precisely is the underlying contention of the prominent actor centric approach.

The actor centric approach ties the activity of terrorism to non-state actors and argues that the two are inseparable. Although strict adherence to the actor centric approach is not particularly widespread, the common inference of the term terrorism coupled with a discourse that is inherently non-state centric, extends considerable passive support to it. To understand why the actor centric approach commands such active and passive support, it was important to examine all the factors that encourage state neglect and non-state centrality.

Thus over the course of the analysis, several important factors were carefully and methodically discussed, which conclusively rejected the actor centric approach and confirmed the assertion that the nature of terrorism is indeed independent of the actor. The most notable factor to emerge out of this discussion was the theatrical attribute of terrorism. Although it is one of the most frequently cited qualities of terrorism, there surprisingly has never been a concerted academic attempt to understand it in its entirety. Most academics simply take the theatrical attribute at face value and that essentially has been the problem all along. Treating the theatrical attribute as self-explanatory misleadingly suggests that it is only applicable to non-state actors. Understood in terms of terrorism's inherent propensity to influence an audience through a threat or act of dramatic violence, the theatrical attribute raises a number of utilitarian objections that typically bar states from practicing terrorism.

It is generally believed that the advantage terrorism offers through its theatrical attribute is limited and short-term and can only benefit relatively weak or powerless actors in the society that have no other violent options available to them. Since states by virtue of their advantageous power position in the society have a range of violent alternatives at their disposal, therefore they would not risk a political backlash (due to the pejorative nature of the term) for some low yielding short-term benefits that terrorism offers. The merits of this prevailing logic, however, were subsequently

quashed and it was shown that not only do states stand to benefit from terrorism but also their potential benefits from it outweigh those of non-state actors.

Since terrorism primarily offers only limited and short-term success (as painstakingly shown in the chapter), a state may therefore utilize it for its immediate or interim objectives while ultimately relying on other forms of violence to achieve its long-term objectives. In comparison, most non-state actors simply cannot pick and choose a form of violence that corresponds to their needs. Constrained by their capabilities, they may have no other option but to resort to terrorism even when it is clearly not the best option. In other words, as opposed to states, non-state actors cannot always utilize terrorism optimally. This observation not only turns the conventional utilitarian logic on its head but also challenges the moral comparisons drawn between state and non-state terrorism. For where terrorism could be a last or only resort for non-state actors, there it is simply a choice among other options for state actors.<sup>83</sup>

If terrorism is a rational goal-driven activity, as is generally believed, then its utility could hold the key to both its definition and understanding. The theatrical attribute, as we have seen, epitomizes the benefits terrorism offers. Its importance to terrorism's conceptual and theoretical edifice cannot therefore be trivialized. This thesis, for that reason, has attempted to provide one of the most detailed and comprehensive accounts of the theatrical attribute, in the hope that it will not only address current failings but also considerably further our overall understanding of the terrorism problem.

While the first four chapters engaged with themes that are frequently discussed in terrorism scholarship, the last two dealt with issues that are either neglected or simply ignored. Chapter five ambitiously sets out to conceptualize terrorism as a tactic, strategy, and ideology. By strongly contesting the ideological view of terrorism, it rejects the idea that terrorism has an independent freestanding existence. Instead it argues that terrorism can only exist in an auxiliary sense whereby it can be taken up either as a tactic or a strategy in other forms of violence. This classification, it has been argued, can potentially resolve our longstanding confusion over labelling an actor terrorist. As a choice between tactical and strategic use of terrorism can help determine whether an actor can be labelled terrorist properly. Additionally, this

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<sup>83</sup> This is considering that both actors want to achieve their goals through violent means.

classification also provides an answer to the question of when and if fear is generated deliberately.

Although the model presented in the chapter is somewhat rudimentary and arguably controversial, it is nevertheless an important first step in the right direction to address some key issues that are normally deemed irresolvable. The pejorative undertone of the term terrorism discourages scholars from conceptualizing or engaging with issues that are deemed overly politicized and divisive. This model, however, stands in opposition to all such claims. It shows that it is possible to engage with complex politicized issues (such as labelling an actor terrorist) in an objective and dispassionate manner.

The last chapter of the thesis methodically engages with the discourse on terrorism. Since terrorism is first and foremost a deeply contested term, such an undertaking was a necessary concluding task. For in order to make terrorism less contested, it is vitally important to make sense of the academic discipline that claims to study it. Given the chaotic state of terrorism scholarship and the half-hearted attempts to address this problem thus far, the chapter offers a timely and crucial contribution. By reflecting on the brief history of terrorism scholarship and the reasons that led to its emergence, it not only exposes the unstable and very questionable roots of the field but also shows how problems compounded over time.

The discourse on terrorism formally emerged primarily in response to the increasingly disproportionate attention terrorism was receiving from media than any real or perceptible change on ground. As the media actively distanced the act of terrorism from its wider socio-political context, it encouraged two opposing moral positions. Those who were swayed by the disproportionate attention the act of terrorism received, were subsequently consumed by the horrors of the act and adopted therefore a strong moral opposition to terrorism. Whereas others that saw beyond the physical act were able to acknowledge the wider context of terrorism and observe some form of moral neutrality. The seeds for discord and division were thus sown just when the field of terrorism studies was still in its infancy. These conflicting moral positions failed to either give or permit a clear direction or path to the field of terrorism studies. Unable to gain any suitable direction at the time of its inception, the field instead fragmented and fractured along these deeply entrenched moral lines.

In the beginning there were essentially two moral positions in the terrorism scholarship: those who strictly opposed terrorism (extreme orthodox) and others that observed some form of moral neutrality (classic orthodox). Over time however, as the moral opposition to terrorism intensified and gained ground, a strand of moral neutrality became exceedingly defensive and ultimately isolated itself from mainstream terrorism scholarship, judging the latter to have been corrupted by strict and uncompromising moral opposition to terrorism. This reactionary position, identifying itself as the critical position, lashed out at orthodox terrorism scholarship and denounced it altogether. In doing so however, it failed to acknowledge not only its own roots but also the longstanding classic orthodox position with which it shared much common ground.<sup>84</sup> Its inability to see past the extreme orthodox position and acknowledge common ground with the classic orthodox position still continues to encourage division and conflict in the discourse, which regrettably reinforces and inflates the assertion that terrorism is a deeply contested term.

Over the course of our analysis it has become evident that all aspects of terrorism, in one way or another, are influenced by the moral factor. This is because the prevailing understanding of terrorism by and large has been determined not by some independent line of inquiry but instead by a strong interplay between different moral positions outlined in this thesis. It is therefore understandable why many academics believe that terrorism is essentially a moral problem.

There is indeed no denying that the interplay between terrorism and morality has been a major stumbling block that has up until now prevented scholars from understanding and defining terrorism. While this is true, it is important to understand that the problem essentially is not with morality and nature of terrorism per se, but instead with academics being locked down to their respective moral standpoints. This is not to say that the nature of terrorism does not raise moral concerns, but more so to point out that it is not responsible for our failure to understand or define terrorism as is generally assumed.

To maintain that the morally problematic nature of terrorism is responsible for the existing conceptual and theoretical stalemate, there should at least first be an

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<sup>84</sup> This is not to say that the critical position did not take any inspiration from the Frankfurt School, but more so to point out the basic understanding of terrorism it shared with orthodox scholarship.

agreement on what makes terrorism morally reprehensible. However, as this thesis has shown, there is no academic consensus on what makes terrorism morally problematic. For some scholars it is simply because terrorism generates fear, while for others it is because it targets civilians or non-combatants. For others still, terrorism is immoral because it is carried out by non-state actors that have no legitimate or legal authority to use violence. Lack of agreement on what makes terrorism morally problematic clearly demonstrates that there is no standout characteristic inherent to terrorism's nature that makes it distinctly immoral. On the contrary, it confirms our assertion that academics have different moral standpoints that prompt them to associate one or the other attribute of terrorism to immorality.

It is important to also understand that subjective moral judgments on terrorism are not in any way unique to it, as we normally maintain different moral positions regarding almost all aspects of social life. Our failure to understand or define terrorism should therefore not be pinned down on terrorism's inherent immorality, but our own subjective moral standpoints and an inability to see past them and understand the true nature of terrorism.

This true nature of terrorism has evaded scholars ever since a formal inquiry into the problem was launched. Treated sometimes as a method or tactic and at other times as a distinct form of violence, the nature of terrorism remains elusive, while a failure to understand it is conveniently blamed on the moral problem. Contrary to this, it will be argued here that the main obstacle to understanding the nature of terrorism is not its inherent morality or immorality but instead our treatment of it as a distinct form of violence and the confusion over whether or not it is a method.

Treating terrorism as a method or as a distinct form of violence has created some fundamental misunderstandings and misconceptions over the years that continue to elude and confuse us. This is because in reality terrorism neither fully functions as a method nor entirely qualifies as a distinct form of violence. When seen as a method, terrorism will inadvertently be confused with ordinary violent methods and practices (such as assassination or kidnapping) that are otherwise clearly not terroristic. On the other hand, seeing it as a form of violence contradicts academic claims that terrorism can be used as a tactic or strategy in other forms of violence.

I will therefore conclude that terrorism is neither a method nor a form of violence. It is not a method because not only does it require several intervening variables but also because the specification of the method is ultimately irrelevant to the all-important effect terrorism inflicts. It cannot also be a form of violence, because unlike other forms of violence terrorism does not have a freestanding or tangible existence.<sup>85</sup> Instead, it has been argued in this thesis that terrorism can perhaps best be described in an auxiliary sense, whereby it can be used as a tactic or strategy in other forms of violence. In a sense therefore, terrorism can perhaps best be described as an affix that gives certain characteristics to a form of violence or movement it is attached to.

While it is true that terrorism plays a supplementary role in other forms of violence, the idea of terrorism being auxiliary can also misleadingly suggest that it is a method or a form of violence. This is not to say that terrorism does not exist in an auxiliary sense but only to point out that the suggestion could and has easily been misconstrued to mean something that terrorism is clearly not. This is because when understood to be auxiliary, terrorism sits somewhat uncomfortably between a method and a form of violence. And since there is no standard criterion to account for such positioning, it is easily confused with both. In fact, it is due to being awkwardly placed as such that terrorism is sometimes regarded as a method and at other times as a form of violence. Much work therefore needs to be done to conceptualize terrorism in an auxiliary sense, as all our existing categories and classifications fail to adequately account for it.<sup>86</sup>

However, despite being seriously under-theorized, the auxiliary sense clearly best captures the essence of terrorism. It is able to show that as opposed to being a method or a form of violence, terrorism only plays a facilitatory or supplementary role. It therefore not only accounts for the intangible nature of terrorism but also effectively outlines its rationale and purpose, whereby terrorism mainly or only exists to provide some distinct benefits that can be utilized in any form of violence. Thus, if terrorism only stands to provide a facilitatory or supplementary role, then the key to understanding its true nature clearly lies in its utility and function.

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<sup>85</sup> This is not to say that other forms of violence have a completely freestanding existence as they too depend on several intervening variables. However, unlike terrorism, they do not have an auxiliary existence whereby they depend on other forms of violence to survive or transpire.

<sup>86</sup> This in part explains why terrorism throughout this thesis has been referred to and at times even treated as a form of violence in this thesis.



The utility of terrorism, as we know, is encapsulated in the theatrical attribute of terrorism. By means of which, terrorism offers the unique advantage of recognition and attention with minimum cost and effort. This is achieved through psychologically influencing an audience with a credible threat of harm. The advantage, however, can only be realized if terrorism targets (or threatens to target) the right people that can serve as message generators for its target audience. Moreover, for recognition and attention or simply effective publicity, it is extremely important that terrorism grabs the attention of media, its primary and in many ways sole communicative platform. For this it not only needs to target the right people but also ensure that its threat is credible and newsworthy.

Given that terrorism has an auxiliary existence, whereby it can only play a supplementary or facilitatory role, the advantages terrorism offers are in many ways representative of its true nature and can and should therefore be utilized to not only understand but also define terrorism. This of course does not mean that terrorism should simply be defined in terms of publicity or attention and recognition. Instead, what is important is the manner in which these benefits are generated, that not only explains why they are cost-effective but also how they are unique to terrorism. Since these benefits are essentially generated through psychologically influencing an audience with some credible threat of harm, terrorism should therefore be defined and understood accordingly.

As the advantage terrorism offers can only be realized if it targets the right people that not only serve as message generators but are also newsworthy, it may at first glance appear difficult to identify individuals in each society that can serve this specific purpose. However, given that every society can broadly be divided into two categories, combatants and non-combatants, and only an attack or its threat directed towards the latter (due to reasons discussed in chapter 2) will send a message to a target audience and generate headlines, it is possible to identify the victims of terrorism as non-combatants. Moreover, as opposed to combatants, non-combatants are not engaged in active combat and so any harm or threat directed towards them will affect the social life and psychology of the individuals and whether intended or not,

will also subsequently generate fear (as outlined in chapter 1).<sup>87</sup> It is important to also note that the advantage of terrorism ultimately materializes through the disproportionate attention provided by media, which further inflates and fosters the element of fear, making it indispensable to terrorism.

In addition to the benefits terrorism offers it is important not to forget its two elementary characteristics, political and rational. While a definition of terrorism must specify the political factor, there is no need to categorically refer to its rationality. Terrorism being political and purposive should in itself suggest that terrorism is a rational activity. Thus in light of our analysis, it is proposed here that terrorism should be defined as *a fear generating political activity that psychologically influences an audience by means of targeting or threatening to target non-combatants with a credible threat of harm.*

It is worth mentioning again that terrorism is essentially an auxiliary tool that is utilized in different forms of violence. Critics of this model will point to isolated or independent acts of terrorism and argue that terrorism can have an independent existence. However, it is important to remember that terrorism is first and foremost political and even seemingly isolated acts of terrorism are connected to some wider social and political movements, and even if they are not, they may still represent some wider political sentiments that may inspire similar events in future or at least present a threat as such, and in case of terrorism, a credible threat is often more important than the act itself. Terrorism, in other words, can never occur in a vacuum.

Seen in an auxiliary sense, terrorism then is a process, not a method or a distinct form of violence. The nature of terrorism, as reflected in its definition, is remarkably consistent over time and is therefore neither revolutionary nor evolutionary, which

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<sup>87</sup> Combatants are not representatives of the broader society and an attack directed towards them will not resonate with a target audience. An attack on combatants fails to psychologically influence a broader audience and is viewed in a military context, it does not for that reason have the same dramatic newsmaking effect. Hence, from a logical and utilitarian standpoint, terrorism cannot be directed against combatants.

should once and for all put an end to the debate that it is old, new, or even protean.<sup>88</sup> Terrorism is not a moral problem as it is made out to be. The problem is with our failure to acknowledge its true nature that defies our standard categories and classifications. As long as terrorism is regarded as a method or a distinct form of violence, its true nature will continue to elude and confuse us.

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<sup>88</sup> Academics that suggest otherwise are often swayed by technological developments or the novelty of methods employed. However, specification of a method as we know it is irrelevant and has no effect on the nature of terrorism as outlined in this thesis.

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